



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



MONDAY — 26 SEP 2022

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	09/25 Global Covid deaths continue to fall
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/09/25/covid-19-world-15-drop-weekly-15/9671664114877/
GIST	<p>Sept. 25 (UPI) -- COVID-19 deaths worldwide are the lowest since the start of the pandemic in March 21, including dropping under 1,000 daily last week, and cases are the fewest since July, 2021 with few hotspots.</p> <p>The seven-day moving average for deaths was down to 1,242, the fewest since 1,074 March 21, 2020, 10 days after the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic, according to Worldometers.info.</p> <p>And cases were at 410,802, which is the least since 397,468 July 5, 2021. Worldwide, cases dropped 15% to 2,875,614 with the total 620,244,913 Sunday. And deaths declined to 8,692, a 24% drop, with the cumulative 6,540,379.</p> <p>Few big countries reported increases in both categories in the past week, mainly in Europe. Case rises include Germany, France, Italy, Austria -- all under 44%. In deaths, gains were in Russia, Taiwan, Philippines, France, Rolland -- all under 13%.</p> <p>Daily deaths worldwide dropped to 500 Sunday, the fewest since 464 March 13, 2020, and 738 Saturday. Last Sunday, they dropped to 966, the first time under 1,000 since 962 on June 19, after revisions were made with update by Worldometers.info.</p> <p>Cases were 251,473, the lowest number since 241,900 on Sept. 28, 2020, and 330,208 Saturday. The last time cases were above 1 million was July 31.</p> <p>Some nations do not report data on weekends. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention doesn't report data on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.</p> <p>The records were 3,846,212 cases on Jan. 21, during the height of the Omicron subvariant, and 16,815 deaths on Jan. 21, 2021, when the Delta subvariant was at its peak.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/25 Shocking levels lead in Chicago tap water
SOURCE	https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/lead-lorilightfoot-pipes/2022/09/25/id/1088965/
GIST	<p>Nearly one in 20 tap water tests, The Guardian revealed in its analysis of data from the city of Chicago, has exceeded federally designated levels for tolerable lead exposure.</p> <p>"This means," the Guardian notes, that of 24,000 tests, nearly 1,000 of those homes exceeded the standards set by the U.S. government. The results drew experts and locals to raise further concern because there are still an estimated 400,000 lead pipes supplying drinking water to homes throughout the city — the vast majority of which are being left untested.</p> <p>"There's a very clear data set here showing very concerning lead levels in Chicago, and the residents need to have this information," said water engineer Elin Betanzo, who helped uncover the Flint, Michigan, water crisis and worked with The Guardian to analyze the data.</p>

"Lead is a potent, irreversible neurotoxin with no safe level of exposure and multigenerational impacts. The time to cut it off is as soon as possible. Foot-dragging is helping nobody.

"This data shows lead well above the action level consistently, at addresses across the city again and again and again, and it's been sitting here publicly available for years. It's amazing. It's shocking," Betanzo added.

In May of last year, Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot decried that previous mayoral administrations had kicked "the can down the road," ignoring the urgent need for replacements of the lead pipes. However, as it stands, since that time, only 180 of the city's nearly half-million lead pipes have been replaced.

At Lightfoot's urging, Chicago has been granted by the state 50 years to replace all its lead lines.

"The bill that's coming out of Springfield doesn't come with any funding. It gives us adequate time, and hopefully we'll get it done way sooner than that," Lightfoot said, according to the [Chicago Tribune](#).

Additionally, researchers found that nine of the top 10 zip codes with the highest test results were neighborhoods of primarily Black and Hispanic residents. One home recorded in the study, found in a primarily Black neighborhood of South Chicago, had lead levels of 1,100 parts per billion (ppb). The Environmental Protection Agency's limit, which the study cites as its benchmark for exceeded lead levels, is 15ppb.

In a review of a separate study [published at the University of Sao Paulo](#), researchers write that "lead-induced neurotoxicity acquired by low-level long-term exposure has special relevance for children ... In many studies, aggressiveness and delinquency have also been suggested as symptoms of lead poisoning."

The researchers add that "drinking water can also be contaminated by lead ... The U.S. National Primary Drinking Water Regulations for Lead and Copper state that water is unsafe if 10% of a municipality's test sample is determined to have lead levels greater than 15 ppb."

While many experts cite that no levels of lead are safe, the American Academy of Pediatrics sets its prescribed levels for school drinking fountains at no more than 1ppb, connected to the fact that a child's brain is particularly susceptible to lead.

At that rate, 71% of Chicago tests The Guardian reviewed would fail.

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HEADLINE	09/25 Puerto Rico still waits hurricane aid
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/floods-storms-hurricanes-caribbean-574e9eefb195f3224cc0da9818e19a1b
GIST	<p>TOA BAJA, Puerto Rico (AP) — City worker Carmen Medina walked purposefully through the working-class community of Tranquility Village under a brutal sun, with clipboard, survey forms and pen in hand — part of a small army of officials trying to gauge the scope of disaster caused by Hurricane Fiona’s strike on Puerto Rico.</p> <p>She stopped at a white-and-seafoam green house and asked the owner to detail her losses in the storm that had flooded much of the town of Toa Baja.</p> <p>“Oh, my dear,” responded Margarita Ortiz, a 46-year-old house cleaner standing in a home that was nearly barren because so many flood-damaged belongings had already been discarded.</p> <p>Pockets of water still bulged from her ceiling Friday in what had been a newly painted house, and Ortiz listed what she could recall of her lost furniture and other goods.</p> <p>After staying in a shelter and with a friend for days, she hopes to move back into her home soon: “When you lose your bed, you lose your head.”</p>

Fiona hit southwestern Puerto Rico with 85 mph (140 kph) winds on Sept. 18 and the broad storm unleashed flooding across the island, which still had not recovered from 2017's Hurricane Maria, a stronger cyclone that slashed across the U.S. territory, obliterating the power grid, which had since been patched but not fully rebuilt.

Puerto Rico's government has said it expects to have a preliminary estimate of the damage Fiona caused in roughly two weeks.

As of Sunday, about half of Puerto Rico's 1.47 million power customers remained in the dark, and 20% of 1.3 million water customers had no service as workers struggled to reach submerged power substations and fix downed lines.

Power company officials announced Sunday that 1.1 million to 1.3 million clients could have power by Friday, Sept. 30 but warned those estimates could change. They did not say when the entire island would be energized.

"(Fiona) affected our whole infrastructure. We are doing everything we can to fix it," said Lawrence Kazmierski, senior vice president for Luma, the company that took over the island's power transmission and distribution more than a year ago.

Gas stations, grocery stores and other businesses have temporarily shut down due to lack of fuel for generators. The National Guard first dispatched fuel to hospitals and other critical infrastructure.

"We're starting from scratch," said Carmen Rivera as she and her wife mopped up water and threw away their damaged appliances, adding to piles of rotting furniture and soggy mattresses lining their street.

Despite being on the opposite side of the island from where Fiona's eye made landfall, Toa Baja was especially hard hit because the Plata River — Puerto Rico's longest — overflowed its banks into the city of more than 74,000 people..

Floodwaters passed the 5-foot mark at Rivera's wood-and-concrete home. She wondered if she might get any financial help, and when.

"I work for the municipality, and what I earn is not, 'wow,'" she said.

Toa Baja officials estimated it could take a month to complete their door-to-door survey aimed at determining damage so that people can get financial aid.

For some, it was more than just about financial loss as people used the chance to describe their stress as well.

"I see an emotional exhaustion in people. It's a 'here we go again,'" said Gretchen Hernández, a social worker who was overseeing the citywide survey.

Many have been forced to throw out food because of the power outages — and some people pitched in to help neighbors.

More than two dozen cars lined up in Toa Baja, where Aida Villanueva was handing out food to fellow members of the community — grapes, croissants, chicken, rice, vegetables and the like.

Seventy-four-year-old Ana Butter arrived before dawn for a chance at food, complaining about a lack of official aid.

"No one has stopped by my house," said Butter, who lives in the neighboring town of Dorado.

	Someone in line wondered aloud what those without power were going to do with so much free chicken. Another yelled, "Tomorrow there'll be a barbecue!" and the crowd laughed.
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HEADLINE	09/25 FDA adviser: healthy should not get booster
SOURCE	https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11247181/FDA-vaccine-adviser-says-healthy-young-people-SHOULDNT-COVID-booster.html
GIST	<p>A top vaccine expert and pediatric doctor is cautioning parents of healthy young people to hold off getting the new COVID booster shot, saying it can carry risks and its efficacy hasn't yet been proven.</p> <p>Dr. Paul Offit, director of the Vaccine Education Center at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and a member of the Food and Drug Administration's Vaccine Advisory Committee, said he's not fully sold on the benefits of a third shot outweighing the harm.</p> <p>'Who really benefits from another dose?' Offit said on CNN.</p> <p>He did acknowledge that studies have shown people who are over 65, immuno-compromised or have a chronic ailments are less likely to be hospitalized with the virus if they've had a third or even fourth shot.</p> <p>The newly developed dose, called a bivalent vaccine, is a cocktail of the original coronavirus strain combined with parts of the omicron BA.4 and BA.5 subvariants. The hope being that people would be able to fight a broader range of more highly contagious virus mutations.</p> <p>But writing in the Wall Street Journal earlier this week, Offitt said preliminary data suggested the new bivalent vaccines were actually worse at warding off COVID infections than the first generation of shots.</p> <p>He highlighted data comparing Moderna's original COVID vaccine and its new bivalent update. Of a test group given both shots, 11 people who'd received bivalent vaccines contracted the virus, while just five people who received the original 'monovalent' shot caught COVID.</p> <p>Offit warned that the Biden administration that 'overselling' the new bivalent vaccines without more data could 'erode the public's trust' in them.</p> <p>He explained that the FDA's recent approval of the new vaccine cooked up by Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech comes with little assurances and some risks.</p> <p>'A healthy young person is unlikely to benefit from the extra dose,' he said.</p> <p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have reported that vaccine side-effects, like myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart muscle, and pericarditis, an inflammation of the heart's outer lining, are rare, but they most often occur in adolescents and young men.</p> <p>Myocarditis can even be fatal, with young people far less likely to suffer a severe COVID infection than older people.</p> <p>'When you are asking people to get a vaccine, I think there has to be clear evidence of benefit,' he said, adding that it's unrealistic to have clinical trials of the latest dose. 'You'd like to have, at least, human data,' he said. So far, the only tests on the new shots have been done on lab mice.</p> <p>'Right now they're saying we should trust mouse data,' he said, 'and I don't think that should ever be true.'</p> <p>Offit voted against approval of the new vaccine.</p> <p>'If there's not clear evidence of benefit, then it's not fair, I think, to ask people to take a risk no matter how small,' Offit said.</p>

The doctor recently cautioned that pushing the new shot without the supporting evidence risks 'eroding the public's trust.'

He said the studies regarding the bivalent vaccine so far were 'underwhelming.'

The increased emphasis on boosters is at odds with President Joe Biden's recent announcement that 'the pandemic is over.'

'The pandemic is over,' Biden told 60 Minutes. 'We still have a problem with COVID. We're still doing a lot of work on it. But the pandemic is over. If you notice, no one's wearing masks. Everybody seems to be in pretty good shape, and so I think it's changing.'

The president's declaration runs counter with what his administration's health officials have been saying.

'We have a virus out there that's still circulating, still killing hundreds of Americans every day,' White House COVID-19 response coordinator, Ashish Jha, said at a September 9 press briefing.

'I think we all as Americans have to pull together to try to protect Americans ... and do what we can to get our health-care system through what might be a difficult fall and winter ahead.'

He also may have submarined his own \$22.4 billion request to Congress to continue the fight against the virus.

There have been about 54,000 new cases of the virus on average over the last two weeks, according to Johns Hopkins University, with about 400 Americans succumbing to the virus every day.

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HEADLINE	09/25 Chaos: panic buying sweeps Florida
SOURCE	https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11248667/Panic-buying-sweeps-Florida-market-shelves-stripped-bare-ahead-Hurricane-Ians-130mph-winds.html
GIST	<p>Supermarket shelves across Florida have been stripped bare as panicked locals prepare for the first major hurricane to make landfall in the sunshine state in four years.</p> <p>Photos from the weekend showed lines of Floridians stretching back from supermarket registers through aisles stripped bare of bottled water and other essentials.</p> <p>Shots from one Florida Costco showed an individual with two industrial sized pallets piled high with cases of water, while at Home Depot and hardware store's people flocked to the construction materials aisle to load up on planks of plywood to board their windows up with.</p> <p>Tropical Storm Ian is expected to strengthen into a hurricane on Sunday and reach 'major' hurricane strength - anything Category 3 or above - on Tuesday before it hits Cuba.</p> <p>The storm is expected to make landfall in Florida midweek, either late Wednesday night or early Thursday morning, and bring with it 130mph winds.</p> <p>Florida Governor Ron DeSantis declared an emergency across the entire state and its 67 counties on Saturday afternoon in a sign of officials' high concern.</p> <p>As of Sunday morning, the storm was roughly 540 miles off of Cuba's western tip. The National Hurricane Center said it could reach 'major hurricane strength' before touching down on the Caribbean nation.</p> <p>The cities of Orlando, Panama City and Tampa are all in Tropical Storm Ian's path, according to the most recent projections The Weather Channel. Parts of Alabama and Georgia are also likely to be affected.</p>

	<p>Residents in the expected path have been urged to make hurricane preparations as National Hurricane Center officials warn of the higher-than-normal degree of 'uncertainty' in the storm's forecasted path and intensity.</p> <p>President Biden also declared an emergency in Florida and activated federal disaster relief aid for the state, just an hour before he cancelled his Florida visit to campaign with Democrat midterm candidates.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/23 CDC: 32% should still be masking
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/health-news/articles/2022-09-23/32-of-americans-should-be-masking-or-considering-the-mitigation-measure
GIST	<p>More than 32% of Americans should be wearing masks while indoors in public spaces or considering the measure based on their risk for severe COVID-19, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>That percentage is down considerably from roughly two months ago, when 87% of Americans lived in counties considered a high or medium COVID-19 community level, according to CDC data.</p> <p>According to the agency, people living in those areas should consider mitigation measures to protect themselves and others, like masking. The percentage has been on the decline for weeks as coronavirus cases, deaths and hospitalization fall.</p> <p>Coronavirus cases in the U.S. have been declining since its most recent peak in July at 130,000 new infections each day on average. Now the U.S. is averaging fewer than 55,000 new cases each day, according to CDC data. COVID-19 transmission levels, however, remain high across the majority of the country.</p> <p>Deaths have fallen slightly but remain elevated at nearly 350 per day. That's down from 500 a day in August.</p> <p>But it still equates to nearly 2,500 deaths per week – a number that experts agree is too high.</p> <p>In fact, the number of COVID-19 deaths still occurring was a sticking point for many who criticized President Joe Biden's remarks that the "pandemic is over."</p> <p>Leading infectious disease expert Anthony Fauci said this week that the number of deaths is "not an acceptable number as far as I'm concerned, we've gotta get it down much, much lower."</p> <p>But Biden administration officials sidestepped questions about whether Biden's statement was incorrect, instead noting that the U.S. is in a different phase.</p> <p>"I think if we look at the big picture, things are very different," CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said when asked about Biden's comments. "We're in a different place. Schools are open and businesses are open. We have a lot of population immunity out there right now."</p> <p>The World Health Organization, on the other hand, did not mince words.</p> <p>"At our media briefings over the past two weeks, I have said that the pandemic is not over, but the end is in sight," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on Thursday.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/25 Firefighters sue Seattle for vax firings
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SOURCE	https://thepostmillennial.com/exclusive-firefighters-sue-seattle-for-damages-after-termination-over-vaccine-mandates
GIST	<p>A lawsuit was filed against the City of Seattle and Fire Chief Harold Scoggins on Friday on behalf of two dozen firefighters who were terminated for refusing to comply with the city's vaccine mandate. The former firefighters are seeking lost wages including their lost benefits and pension rights.</p> <p>The lawsuit comes on the heels of a suit filed earlier this month which was seeking injunctive relief and a temporary restraining order against the city and Fire Chief Harold Scoggins to prevent any more members of the department from being fired because of the policy. A judge ruled that the terminations must be placed on hold until the results of a hearing in mid-October which will determine the fate of the firefighters, and possibly the city's vaccine mandate.</p> <p>According to the new lawsuit, the Seattle firefighters were terminated because although the city through the department acknowledged each of their sincerely held religious beliefs preventing them from receiving the vaccination against COVID-19, they were still denied accommodations for their exemptions.</p> <p>According to court documents obtained by <i>The Post Millennial</i>, "There is no evidence that Defendants offered or suggested any accommodation" nor "that Defendants made any attempt to eliminate the conflict."</p> <p>Additionally, "There is no evidence that the Defendants engaged in any dialogue with the Plaintiffs to find an accommodation," and the "Defendants acted in a passive and/or generalized manner toward the group collectively and did not engage in a dialogue or attempt to show cooperation in resolving the conflict."</p> <p>The suit alleges that "By his own admission, Defendant Scoggins was ultimately responsible for the accommodation or non-accommodation decisions regarding Plaintiffs."</p> <p>The suit also alleges that the city and Scoggins "had pre-determined to not accommodate religious exemption employees, including each Plaintiff." The suit cites sworn testimony by Deputy Chief and Union President for Local 2898 Thomas Walsh obtained by <i>The Post Millennial</i> in which he stated that during the pandemic before the vaccines were available, the Seattle Fire Department had tens of millions of contacts with the public and only a single instance of transmission.</p> <p>Walsh, the third highest ranking member in the department also stated that "As Deputy Chief, it is apparent to me that the individualized accommodation assessment process and the so-called interactive process was a sham because it was predetermined by the Department that no religious accommodation would be accommodated."</p> <p>Deputy Chief Walsh also noted that "despite the termination of all unvaccinated firefighters, the Department had a severe COVID-19 outbreak among its fully vaccinated members and is still dealing with ongoing COVID outbreaks."</p> <p>According to court documents, "Assistant Chief Bryan Hastings stated to at least one witness, 'I just wish the 18th would get here so we could fire everybody and move on.'" It is also alleged by the plaintiffs that "At a meeting on or about October 30, 2021, Adrienne Thompson, of the Seattle Mayor's office, was asked for written confirmation about the city's policy, as revealed to City's Human Resources Leads on or about October 13, 2021, that no accommodations would be given by the city for any religious exemptions."</p> <p>According to court documents, Ms. Thompson, stated: "After talking to the attorneys, we are not comfortable providing such a statement," and "Ms. Thompson did not respond that the policy of no accommodation for religious exemptions was not the policy of the Mayor of Seattle, or of the City."</p>

The suit alleges that "The Seattle Fire Department engaged in an open practice of prioritizing medical objectors over religious objectors, treating a secular activity more favorably than an equivalent religious one when identifying accommodations" and that "The foregoing practice of deprioritizing religious objectors was part of a city-wide policy."

According to the suit, Deputy Mayor Tiffany Washington stated in an October 13, 2021 email to the Acting Director of Seattle Human Services Department, with Ms. Thompson copied, that "the department has to prioritize those with medical exemptions. Once you address accommodations for this group you can move to those with religious exemptions."

The plaintiffs also allege that "Defendants have investigated breaking the chain of command via email in response to a City-wide email from the Mayor regarding political positions known to be objectionable to certain religious individuals – those who responded directly to the Mayor in agreement were not investigated, those who not did agree with the Mayor's position were investigated."

The court documents state that "Even based upon the prior science, the Seattle Fire Department, and Mr. Scoggins were aware that, throughout the pandemic, before the vaccine, there was only one reported case of transmission by or to a Seattle Firefighters and the public."

Additionally, "Thomas Rea, Medical Director, King County EMS, co-authored a September 2021 study which concluded that there was 'a very low overall risk for COVID-19 infection among the EMS first responder workforce.'"

By contrast, the Seattle Fire Department has suffered a series of COVID-19 outbreaks since implementing its vaccine mandate and in December of 2021, "the exact accommodations suggested by the religious objectors (e.g. masking, daily testing, isolation, and social distancing) were implemented by the Department."

The suit also cited Democrat Governor Jay Inslee's announcement on September 8, 2022, that his declared state of emergency would end on October 31, 2022, and that the vaccine mandate for state workers would be removed for health care workers.

The court documents also cited President Joseph Biden stating in a September 18, 2022, interview: "The pandemic is over. If you notice, no one's wearing a mask."

Additionally, on August 11, 2022, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued guidance related to COVID-19 prevention and transmission that declared that both vaccinated and unvaccinated should be treated equally, removed requirements for social distancing and, instead, moving forward, requires a focus on the most vulnerable populations, as well as acknowledging that the mandated vaccine does not stop infection or transmission.

The suit alleges that "At the time of the attempted terminations of the Plaintiffs, the City lacked adequate evidence to support its assertion that the vaccine stopped or substantially inhibited virus transmission, and, in fact, was aware of substantial evidence that the vaccine stopped neither transmission nor infection."

Nathan Arnold, attorney for the firefighters told *The Post Millennial*, "Seattle public safety is in shambles. The Fire Department is paying unprecedented overtime."

He added, "This case was also filed before the latest CDC guidance and the court decision regarding the NYPD became public - both buttress our position." A Manhattan supreme court judge [ruled on Friday](#) that New York City cops who were fired because of the city's Covid vaccine mandate had to be reinstated.

Arnold continued, "Even if the CDC had been transparent throughout the pandemic, these Firefighters never should have been terminated and our new Mayor and City Attorney should recognize that."

HEADLINE	09/23 States paid out \$45B bogus jobless claims
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/sep/23/states-paid-pandemic-unemployment-benefits-200000-/
GIST	<p>States paid out billions of dollars in pandemic unemployment claims to more than 200,000 applicants whose Social Security numbers indicated they were dead, according to an inspector general's audit.</p> <p>Nearly 1 million more claims were paid to Social Security numbers that were submitted in multiple states. That's another indication of fraud because the law allowed someone to claim the enhanced pandemic unemployment benefits in a single state at one time.</p> <p>The Labor Department's inspector general said 1.7 million more claims were paid to people who filed from "suspicious email addresses."</p> <p>All told, the claims accounted for more than \$45 billion in potentially bogus unemployment payments during the first two years after the onset of the pandemic, the audit concluded.</p> <p>Carolyn R. Hantz, an assistant inspector general, said that's nearly three times the estimate issued in June 2021.</p> <p>Her office made a series of recommendations at that time, and she expressed consternation that the Labor Department's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) hasn't fixed things by now.</p> <p>"As of the date of this alert memorandum, ETA has not taken sufficient action to implement these recommendations," she wrote. "ETA's lack of sufficient action significantly increases the risk of even more [unemployment] payments to ineligible claimants."</p> <p>She said the problem "needs immediate action."</p> <p>States run the unemployment program with federal financial backing. During the early months of the pandemic, Congress poured cash into the program to bolster shutdown orders, giving some financial security to Americans pushed out of work.</p> <p>Many state systems were outdated and allowed for what analysts say is a colossal amount of fraud. Some estimates say more than \$200 billion of the \$875.2 billion spent on pandemic unemployment aid went to fraudsters.</p> <p>In its official response to the report, the Labor Department said it has been trying to get states up to speed on protections against fraud.</p> <p>"ETA agrees with the OIG's assessment regarding the significant increase in fraudulent activity challenging state UI programs across the nation during the pandemic," said Brent Parton, acting assistant secretary.</p> <p>The department said it has sent technical teams to states, offered \$665 million to help improve systems and launched a public awareness campaign to help consumers spot fraud.</p> <p>Some of the fraud seems like it should have been easy to weed out.</p> <p>That includes 205,766 claims to applicants using Social Security numbers for people listed as dead. Those payments totaled \$139.4 million.</p> <p>Another \$267.3 million was paid to applicants using Social Security numbers of people believed to have been in federal prison — and therefore ineligible — at the time.</p>

Much bigger were the payments to 991,793 Social Security numbers that appeared in multiple states, accounting for \$28.9 billion, and 1.7 million in payments associated with suspicious emails, for \$16.2 billion in total payments.

Investigators deemed an address suspicious if it was from a service that specialized in hiding identities, which makes it easier to file multiple claims.

The unemployment program proved to be an irresistible lure for fraudsters during the pandemic, with \$600 in weekly benefits on top of whatever states were paying. The average applicant could get tens of thousands of dollars, and individual fraudsters filed reams of claims, walking away with millions of dollars.

Of \$872.5 billion in pandemic unemployment paid out, outside analysts said, total fraud may have topped \$200 billion.

A separate watchdog report by the Homeland Security Department inspector general said a supplemental unemployment benefits program run by the Federal Emergency Management Agency blew more than 12% of its funds on bogus payments.

In the Labor Department inspector general's report, released last week, investigators said they faced hurdles in trying to spot fraud. One of those was struggling to get a look at state data.

The Labor Department said it is supporting the inspector general in trying to get access.

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HEADLINE	09/25 Protests death toll grows in Iran
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/26/death-toll-grows-in-iran-as-mahsa-amini-protests-continue-for-10th-night
GIST	<p>Iranians have taken to the streets for a 10th consecutive night to protest against the death of Mahsa Amini in defiance of a warning from the judiciary.</p> <p>Officially at least 41 people have died since the unrest began, mostly protesters but including members of the security forces, but sources say the real figure is higher.</p> <p>Norway-based group Iran Human Rights (IHR) said on Sunday evening that the death toll was at least 57, but noted that ongoing internet blackouts were making it increasingly difficult to confirm fatalities in a context where the women-led protests have spread to scores of cities.</p> <p>Images circulated by IHR showed protesters on the streets of Tehran shouting “death to the dictator”, purportedly after nightfall on Sunday.</p> <p>Echoing a warning the previous day by the president, Ebrahim Raisi, the judiciary chief, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, on Sunday “emphasised the need for decisive action without leniency” against the core instigators of the “riots”, the judiciary’s Mizan Online website said.</p> <p>Hundreds of demonstrators, reformist activists and journalists have been arrested amid the mostly night-time demonstrations since unrest first broke out after 22-year-old Amini’s death in police custody on 16 September. Amini was detained by the morality police for not wearing a hijab properly.</p> <p>Iran’s largest protests in almost three years have seen security forces fire live rounds, while protesters have hurled rocks, torched police cars and set fire to state buildings.</p> <p>Some female protesters have removed and burned their hijabs in the rallies and cut off their hair, some dancing near large bonfires to the applause of crowds that have chanted “zan, zendegi, azadi” or “woman, life, freedom”.</p>

Web monitor NetBlocks noted “rolling blackouts” and “widespread internet platform restrictions”, with WhatsApp, Instagram and Skype having already been blocked. This followed older bans on Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and Telegram.

Speaking on behalf of the European Union, its foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, said “the widespread and disproportionate use of force against nonviolent protesters is unjustifiable and unacceptable”. He condemned the internet restrictions as “blatantly violating freedom of expression”.

Iran has summoned the British and Norwegian ambassadors over what it called interference and hostile media coverage, while the foreign minister, Hossein Amirabdollahian, also criticised US support for “rioters”.

On Sunday, the US national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said the US had taken “tangible steps” to sanction the morality police.

The UK was blamed for the “hostile character” of London-based Farsi media. The UK foreign ministry said it championed media freedom and condemned Iran’s “crackdown on protesters, journalists and internet freedom”.

Norway’s envoy was summoned to explain the “interventionist stance” of its parliament’s speaker, Tehran-born Masud Gharahkhani, who has expressed support for the protesters.

“If my parents had not made the choice to flee in 1987, I would have been one of those fighting in the streets with my life on the line,” Gharahkhani tweeted on Sunday.

Pro-government rallies were also held on Sunday, with the main event taking place in central Tehran.

But one of the main teachers unions on Sunday called for teachers and students to stage a national strike on Monday and Wednesday.

Protests abroad have been held in solidarity with Iranian women in Athens, Berlin, Brussels, Istanbul, Madrid, New York and Paris, among other cities.

Iranian Oscar-winning director Asghar Farhadi called on activists and artists around the world to support the protesters, who he said were “looking for simple and yet fundamental rights that the state has denied them for years”.

“I deeply respect their struggle for freedom and the right to choose their own destiny despite all the brutality they are subjected to,” Farhadi said in a post on Instagram.

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HEADLINE	09/25 ‘Striketober’ looms as walkouts increase
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/sep/26/striketober-unions-strikes-us-october
GIST	<p>Thousands of workers around the US are going on strike or threatening to do so heading into October, amid a recent surge of labor action activity in America and just one month before crucial midterm elections.</p> <p>Support for labor unions in the US has grown over the past year, as a surge in organizing has resulted in workers winning union elections at major corporations including Starbucks, Amazon, Apple, Chipotle, Trader Joe’s, Google, REI and Verizon.</p> <p>Union election petitions increased 58% in the first three quarters of fiscal year 2022, compared with 2021. Public support for labor unions is at its highest point since 1965, according to the most recent Gallup poll, with a 71% approval of labor unions in the US.</p>

According to the [labor action tracker](#) at Cornell University, strikes in 2022 so far have significantly outpaced strike activity in 2021, with 180 strikes involving 78,000 workers in the first six months of 2022, compared with 102 strikes involving 26,500 workers in the first six months of 2021. The tracker recorded 41 strikes that started between 15 August and 15 September 2022, involving 35,250 workers.

“Strikes appear to be increasing as we head into the fall,” said Johnnie Kallas, project director for the Cornell University ILR labor action tracker. “These strikes are being led by workers in the service sector. Starbucks workers have organized over 70 strikes so far this year in response to poor working conditions and employer retaliation. Over the past month, thousands of healthcare workers and educators have gone on strike to protest understaffing, low pay and poor conditions for patients and students.”

Last October was also dubbed “Striketober” by the US labor movement as a number of high-profile labor strikes and strike threats occurred throughout the month.

Some of the largest strikes in recent weeks in the US have included [15,000 nurses](#) who went on a three-day strike in Minnesota, [over 1,100 timber workers](#) in Oregon and Washington, [over 4,500 teachers and staff](#) in Columbus, Ohio, [more than 6,000 teachers](#) and staff in Seattle, [2,000 mental healthcare workers](#) in California, [1,200 casting plant workers](#) at Stellantis in Indiana, and [700 nursing home workers](#) in Pennsylvania.

Among the groups of workers that have recently authorized strikes include [graduate workers](#) at Clark University, while graduate workers at Indiana University will [soon decide](#) whether to resume a strike from earlier this year, [about 800 auto workers](#) at the Ultium Cells electric vehicle plant in Lordstown, Ohio, [voted to authorize a strike](#) for union recognition this month, and [115,000 railroad workers could still strike](#) if they decide to vote down tentative contract agreements in the coming weeks.

UFCW Local 1059, representing about 12,500 workers at Kroger grocery stores in the Columbus, Ohio, area [voted to authorize a strike](#) on 16 September after rejecting the third contract proposal offered to members, Kroger’s latest and final offer.

A strike date hasn’t been set yet. A Kroger employee who voted in favor of authorizing the strike, but requested to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation, explained they feel they have no choice due to many longtime workers still receiving poverty wages while working short-staffed.

“We should be making a living wage right now,” the worker said. “They’ve made a ton of money for the higher-ups, they’ve made a ton of money for their shareholders. But once again they’re saying that they can’t afford to pay us the wages that we just need to survive.”

The worker argued the proposed wage increases didn’t align with prices that have increased on customers and with Kroger’s profits, which have soared throughout the pandemic, [with \\$3.5bn](#) in operating profit in 2021 and projections of at least [\\$4.6bn in operating profit](#) in 2022, in addition to [authorizing](#) a \$1bn stock buyback.

“I know for a lot of people that this strike is a really huge personal sacrifice to them, but we don’t have any other options,” the worker added. “We’re not trying to be greedy. But we’re just really tired and we sacrificed a whole lot during the pandemic.”

In Boston, about 300 workers at Sysco have a strike vote scheduled for 25 September as their contract is set to expire at the end of the month, with the union alleging Sysco has been dragging out negotiations, which Sysco has denied. Sysco workers have gone on strike so far this year in [the Baltimore, Maryland, area](#) and [St Cloud, Minnesota](#).

“We’ve been called essential workers for the longest time and now it’s just empty words,” said Trevor Ashley, a driver at Sysco in Boston for over 20 years.

	<p>In Buffalo, New York, over 6,300 healthcare workers at Kaleida Health voted to authorize a strike on 15 September amid their new union contract negotiations, with 96% in support. In the event of a strike, the unions representing workers will have to issue a 10-day notice.</p> <p>“They left us no choice but to authorize a strike. For them to say they’re listening is not accurate,” said Kim Kornowski, a registered nurse at Millard Fillmore Suburban hospital.</p> <p>Workers at Kaleida Health claimed staffing shortages and cuts have increased workloads and worsened working conditions throughout the pandemic, with hundreds of vacant positions that still need to be filled. “We’re there to help take care of patients, but when there’s only one of me and a nurse that has seven or eight patients, it’s hard for us to take care of patients,” said Betty Thompson, a patient care assistant at Kaleida Health.</p> <p>Kaleida Health has said it is making strike contingency preparations as they continue working to reach a contract with the union, but claimed the recent union proposal was too expensive.</p> <p>“What we want is a fair contract that appropriately rewards our workforce and positions the organization for the future. That includes no concessionary bargaining, addressing staffing needs, and once again becoming the market leader in wages,” said a Kaleida Health spokesperson.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/26 Day 215 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/26/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-215-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The United States and its allies will act “decisively” if Russia uses a tactical nuclear weapon in Ukraine, the US national security adviser says, reaffirming the Biden White House’s previous response to mounting concerns that Vladimir Putin’s threats are in increased danger of being realised. Jake Sullivan told CBS on Sunday: “We have communicated directly, privately and at very high levels to the Kremlin that any use of nuclear weapons will be met with catastrophic consequences for Russia, that the US and our allies will respond decisively, and we have been clear and specific about what that will entail.” • Protests against the Vladimir Putin’s partial military mobilisation order appear to be continuing in the Russian republic of Dagestan, with videos showing standoffs between police and the public. Video footage posted on social media shows police arresting demonstrators protesting against the order to draft 300,000 more Russians to the army for the war effort in Ukraine. • Volodymyr Zelenskiy has vowed to liberate the entire country as Russia pressed on with its supposed referendum in occupied areas of Ukraine and so-called election workers accompanied by masked gunmen knocked on doors to get people to vote. The Ukrainian president said the country’s armed forces would throw out Russia’s forces and retaliate against “every strike of the aggressor”. He vowed that Ukraine would regain control of the southern Kherson region and the eastern Donbas, saying: “Every murderer and torturer will be brought to justice.” • The UK prime minister, Liz Truss, has said its allies France and the US should continue to support Ukraine in the face of the Russian president’s increased threats and his military call-up. Truss said Vladimir Putin was escalating the war because he was not winning and had made a mistake. • Long queues of vehicles were at border crossing between Russia and Mongolia as people continued to flee the Kremlin’s mobilisation order, AFP reported. The head of a checkpoint in the town of Altanbulag told the agency that more than 3,000 Russians had entered Mongolia via the crossing since Wednesday. • Serbia will not recognise Russian annexation “referendums” in occupied Ukrainian areas. The Serbian foreign minister, Nikola Selakovic, said the referendums “completely contradict our state and national interests, our policy of dealing with territorial integrity, sovereignty and the principle of inviolability of borders”.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zelenskiy has renewed calls for western allies to cut Russian banks from Swift, the global banking system that allows banks to send messages to each other. “If we cut Russian banks from Swift, we need to cut all Russian banks from Swift,” he said. • Zelenskiy also said that Ukraine has received Nasams (national advance surface-to-air missile systems) air defence missiles from the US. In a TV interview, Zelenskiy thanked President Joe Biden and confirmed that Ukraine now had the systems in the country. Zelenskiy also said Russia’s military call-up was a tacit acknowledgment that its “army is not able to fight”. • Thousands of Hassidic Jewish pilgrims flocked to central Ukraine to mark the Jewish new year on Sunday, ignoring international travel warnings as Russian forces attacked more targets from the air. The pilgrims, many travelling from Israel and farther afield, converged on the small city of Uman, the burial site of Nachman of Breslov, a respected Hassidic rabbi who died in 1810, Associated Press reported. • The Ukrainian ambassador to the UK has issued a plea for continued “generosity” and “patience” from those offering a home to refugees in Britain. Vadym Prystaiko said Ukraine needed “much more” help from the UK as the country fought Moscow’s invasion, with the Kremlin’s military call-up amounting to “something formidable”. • Israel will treat 20 Ukrainian soldiers who have been injured in the war with Russia, according to the Israeli ambassador to Ukraine. The first two patients would arrive on Sunday for treatment at Sheba Medical Centre near Tel Aviv, envoy Michael Brodsky said. • Aiden Aslin, one of the five British nationals released by Russia last week, has given his first media interview after returning to the UK. He told the Sun on Sunday that he was kept in solitary confinement for five months and “treated worse than a dog”.
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HEADLINE	09/25 Crimean Tatars decry Russia mobilization
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/25/a-way-to-get-rid-of-us-crimean-tatars-decry-russia-mobilisation
GIST	<p>Rights activists in Crimea say Russia’s mobilisation drive in the occupied peninsula is disproportionately targeting Crimean Tatars, an ethnic group that has largely opposed Russian rule since the area was annexed in 2014.</p> <p>“Everywhere, in every town, I am hearing that the majority of those mobilised are Crimean Tatars, and we know they are particularly targeting settlements with predominantly Crimean Tatar populations,” an activist from the group still living on the peninsula said in a telephone interview.</p> <p>“This will be a catastrophe for us that will take years to heal.”</p> <p>Vladimir Putin announced “partial mobilisation” on Wednesday in an attempt to bolster Russia’s flagging invasion of Ukraine with new troops. Across the country, families have said goodbye to men who have been called up to fight. There have been reports of disproportionately high numbers mobilised in poor regions populated by ethnic minority groups, such as Buryatia and the republics of the North Caucasus.</p> <p>The largely Muslim Crimean Tatars make up about 13% of Crimea’s population. There is no official breakdown of who has been mobilised but extensive anecdotal evidence suggests Crimean Tatars have been targeted disproportionately. Crimea SOS, a Ukrainian rights organisation, estimates that 90% of mobilisation notices have been given to Crimean Tatars.</p> <p>“This is a conscious effort to destroy the Crimean Tatar nation,” Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said during his nightly video address on Saturday.</p> <p>Tamila Tasheva, Zelenskiy’s top representative for Crimea, also said she believed Russia was targeting the group deliberately. “Crimean Tatars are the least loyal segment of the population to Russia, and it was clear they were very buoyed by recent Ukrainian military successes. Now they are being punished,” she said.</p>

Tasheva, who is Crimean Tatar, said she had received dozens of reports from members of her ethnic group of police arriving in their towns or villages and handing out summons.

“People are panicking, they don’t know what to do,” she said. She is advising those mobilised to try to surrender to Ukrainian forces at the first possible opportunity. “But of course, we’re worried they’ll just be shot in the back by the Russians.”

Asked if arming thousands of opponents was a strategy that could backfire for Moscow, she said: “Unfortunately, the Russians are not stupid enough to put all the Crimean Tatars together in the same regiment.”

Others also reported a sense of helplessness and panic in the community, with people attempting to flee Crimea.

With the nearest operating international airport hundreds of miles from Crimea, persistent rumours that Russia could close the bridge over the Kerch strait that links the peninsula to Russia and huge queues at Russia’s remaining open land borders with other countries, fleeing is not easy.

“Right now, it’s the only topic of discussion. How to flee, how to hide, how to get out of Russia. Yesterday I was at a birthday party and nobody was talking about anything else. There are no smiles, no happiness. Everyone is depressed, the women are in tears,” said the activist.

Tatars have called Crimea home for centuries, but became a minority after Russia took over the region in the 18th century under Catherine the Great. Joseph Stalin had the entire population deported to Central Asia during the second world war, wrongly smearing the group as Nazi collaborators. Most were only allowed to return to the peninsula in the 1980s.

This long experience of persecution led many Crimean Tatars to be extremely hostile to the Russian annexation in 2014. Russian authorities subsequently tried to co-opt Crimean Tatar leaders, but most refused to collaborate. A campaign of harassment and persecution against active community leaders began, and Russia outlawed the mejlis, the Crimean Tatar representative body. Many of its members were banned from entering the peninsula and are now based in Kyiv or elsewhere.

Dozens of Crimean Tatars are recognised as political prisoners, and there has been an increase in arrests and pressure since the war began in February, with Russian authorities on the lookout for sabotage and plots among a population it considers disloyal.

Crimean police detained six wedding guests and the venue owner earlier this month after the DJ played a pro-Ukraine song at a wedding, and Russian authorities have said anyone displaying pro-Ukraine sentiment is liable to arrest.

Tasheva said: “First they tried to buy us, then they tried to repress us and now they see mobilisation as a way to try to simply get rid of us.”

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HEADLINE	09/25 China property bubble as Ponzi scheme
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/sep/25/china-property-bubble-evergrande-group
GIST	<p>A little more than a year ago, a Chinese property developer largely unknown to the outside world said its cashflow was under “tremendous pressure” and it might not be able to pay back some of its eye-watering debts of \$300bn (£275bn).</p> <p>Today, that company, China Evergrande Group, is all too well known as the poster child of the country’s economic woes. House prices in China have fallen in each of the 12 months since Evergrande’s</p>

now [prophetic warning](#), with Xi Jinping's government now preparing to throw billions of dollars at a property market that experts say increasingly resembles a giant Ponzi scheme.

Prices for new homes in 70 Chinese cities fell by a worse-than-expected 1.3% year on year in August, [according to official figures](#), reflecting a turbulent 12 months in which China's housing sector has gone from an unstoppable driver of growth and prosperity to being the chief threat to the world's powerhouse economy.

Nearly a third of all property loans are now classed as bad debts – 29.1%, up from 24.3% at the end of last year, [according to research by Citigroup this week](#) – with once safe state-owned property developers driving the increase.

The crisis at [Evergrande](#), then China's second biggest property developer, has spread through the industry to the point where the government's pledge this week of 200bn yuan (£26bn) to kickstart investment was judged by analysts to be well short of what was needed.

The rating agency S&P said at least 800bn yuan would be needed – or even 10 times that much in the worst-case scenario – to rescue a property market in which prices have fallen, sales have slid, developers have gone bust and buyers have staged [an unprecedented and widening mortgage boycott](#) in protest at having paid largely upfront for homes that have not been finished.

The market is experiencing a total collapse in confidence, analysts say, and only government intervention can save the day.

About 2m off-plan homes remain unfinished across [China](#), according to a rough estimate by S&P. That figure will grow if sales continue to fall and developers continue to run out of money to complete projects.

“China's property downturn has turned into a crisis of confidence that only the government can fix,” S&P said. “If falling sales tip more developers into distressed territory, things will get worse. The distressed firms will halt construction on more pre-sold homes, hitting buyers' confidence further. Our rough estimate is that about 2m unfinished homes presold by Chinese developers are now in limbo. This has shattered confidence in this market.”

For years, preselling homes – mainly apartments in large blocks and newly styled urban villages – kept the developers flush with cash and, along with borrowing on an epic scale, meant they could buy more land and keep building. In 2021, about 90% of homes were sold off plan in China.

But Xi's decision two years ago to crack down on “reckless” lending starved developers of their funding and, when the music stopped, it emerged they could not finish homes they had already taken money for because they had spent it on buying the next parcel of land or project.

In short, it resembles a Ponzi scheme where money taken from new investors is used to pay off existing clients in an ever-decreasing spiral to collapse. It is even how the [sober pages of the Economist sees it](#).

George Magnus, an associate at the China Centre at the University of Oxford, said the Chinese market was not quite a classic Ponzi scheme in the style of [Bernie Madoff's notorious scam](#) that was exposed after the global financial crisis, but it was very similar.

“Developers raise huge amounts money from customers to basically fund the purchase of the next construction projects. This continues on and on before it has got to the size it has,” Magnus said. “It's not strictly a Ponzi in the asset management sense, the Madoff style, but they're essentially using clients' money to fund the next project, so yes, it's the standard definition of what that means.”

The property market accounts for anywhere between 20% and 30% of China's gross domestic product. This is a huge proportion compared with other large economies, and is thanks partly to the country's

investment-led economic model that has prioritised construction. As a result it has bred a hitherto blind faith in the property values, which have risen more or less uniformly for the past two decades or more.

But with repeated lockdowns also depressing the market, the longstanding belief that prices can only ever go up is starting to wane. This could lead to Chinese households moving 127tn yuan out of property in the next nine years and into other investments such as equities, bonds and wealth management products, according to the brokerage and investment group CLSA, [Bloomberg reported](#) last week.

“People are losing confidence in the presale model,” said Magnus. “It’s a reboot of the Chinese mortgage market ... the hallowed asset of property. The fabled rising middle class of China are not in great shape along with lockdowns as well.”

The situation presents a major challenge for the Xi government, especially with the all-important party congress coming up in October when the president will seek to become ruler for as long as he wants.

But although his government is pushing for the restructuring of failing developers such as Evergrande and hoping to spread the debt burden across state-owned enterprises, banks and local governments, the pain is likely to fall on ordinary Chinese – just as it does on ordinary investors when a Ponzi scheme eventually collapses.

Anne Stevenson Yang, a co-founder of the US-based J Capital Research and a China expert, said the regime in Beijing was more interested in protecting the state-owned enterprises, institutions and billionaire owners of companies than homeowners – and that would inform its response to the crisis.

“There’s what they can do and there’s what they will do,” she said. “What they can do is to transfer money to households such as by gifting apartments, allowing people to live in places where mortgages are unpaid, and boosting pensions so people have confidence and spend again.

“But that’s not of course what is going to happen. The Chinese political system is not built around individuals, it’s built around companies, they are the constituents. The political system operates through them.

“The property market was not designed to be a Ponzi scheme – a Ponzi scheme needs to be designed. But it is an investment bubble. And the bubble has ended.”

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HEADLINE	09/26 Ukraine forces expand eastern offensive
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/pushing-east-of-kupyansk-ukrainian-forces-expand-offensive-11664111037?mod=hp_lead_pos5
GIST	<p>KUPYANSK, Ukraine—The grain elevator towering over the eastern edge of Kupyansk, the former seat of Russian power in Ukraine’s Kharkiv region, was supposed to be defended by soldiers from an elite Russian unit.</p> <p>But when troops from Ukraine’s International Legion moved to seize the compound on Thursday, part of the developing Ukrainian military offensive east of the Oskil River, the expected firefight never happened.</p> <p>“They just ran away. They know they are finished here,” said the team leader, a Latvian soldier who goes by the call-sign Ulvis, as his comrades from the U.S., Britain and other nations gathered with Ukrainian officers in a warehouse in eastern Kupyansk to plan their next mission.</p> <p>Ukrainian forces, including the all-volunteer International Legion created shortly after Russia invaded on Feb. 24, seized most of the Russian-occupied parts of the Kharkiv region, including the western half of Kupyansk, in a lightning offensive two weeks ago. This defeat prompted Moscow to start mobilizing hundreds of thousands of reservists as it attempts to shore up the crumbling front-lines.</p>

Russia tried to halt the Ukrainian offensive by blowing up the only bridge over the Oskil that links the two sides of Kupyansk. That didn't work. In recent days, Ukrainian forces have steadily expanded their foothold on the eastern side of Oskil, using pontoon crossings to fill the area with tanks and infantry fighting vehicles.

"We keep moving ahead, destroying Russian armed-forces formations. In a few more days, we should control the entire Kupyansk district," said Andriy Kanashevych, acting head of the district's military administration.

Securing the remaining Russian-held urban areas on the eastern side of Kupyansk would clear the way for Ukrainian forces to push into the [nearby Luhansk region](#), one of the four that [Russia seeks to annex](#) through snap referendums currently under way.

Luhansk is the only one of these four regions that is [almost entirely controlled by Moscow](#). Successful Ukrainian advances there in the coming weeks would be a major morale boost for Ukraine—and another embarrassing [setback for the Kremlin](#), which trumpeted the seizure of the entirety of Luhansk in early July as a strategic victory.

After taking the grain elevator, Legion soldiers patrolled on foot the industrial zone on the eastern edge of Kupyansk, snaking past the railway line as they monitored the sky for Russia's Orlan drones.

By one warehouse, the body of a Russian soldier lay bloated under a sign on the building that proclaimed, "We value everyone, we work with the best." A burned infantry fighting vehicle straddled the road. While artillery exchanges in the area are intense, no gunfire could be heard inside Kupyansk city.

"Our task is to finish mopping up the city, to keep holding it in case of a counterattack, and to continue the counteroffensive," said Yan, a Ukrainian officer who commands a company of foreign Legionnaires. The Legion here works under the overall command of a Ukrainian army brigade responsible for this stretch of the front, many of its members drawn to the fight by reports of Russian atrocities.

Kupyansk, where some 15,000 residents remain out of the prewar population of 32,000 people, was where Russia established its government for the one-third of the Kharkiv region that it occupied until this month. Here, too, Moscow planned to conduct a referendum on annexation—an endeavor scuttled by this month's Ukrainian advance.

The city was taken by Russia unscathed in February. As Russian forces approached, Mayor Hennadiy Matsegora told citizens that he agreed to hand over Kupyansk without a fight, so as to preserve it from destruction. Ukrainian troops had already retreated.

"We were abandoned by everyone," said Oleh Kostenko, a truck driver who lives in the eastern part of the city. "Kupyansk has never been a traitorous city. But what could our people fight with? Pitchforks?"

Mr. Matsegora has been indicted on a charge of treason by Kyiv. The Russians detained him in July, and his current whereabouts isn't known.

As long columns of Russian tanks and armored vehicles streamed through Kupyansk for three weeks in February and March, many locals were convinced by this display of military might that Russia would stay here forever.

"The Russians seemed invincible. I'm not going to lie, I couldn't believe that Ukraine would ever be able overcome all that," said Kostyantyn Zdorikov, Mr. Kostenko's neighbor who used to serve in the Ukrainian border force. "That is why so many collaborated, that is why so many kowtowed and bowed to the Russians."

Not everyone collaborated. Even after Russian soldiers dispersed pro-Ukrainian protest rallies in the early days of the occupation, detaining pro-Ukrainian activists, underground resistance continued.

“Kupyansk is Ukraine” proclaims fading graffiti on the city’s walls, overpainted with RF, for Russian Federation, and the Russian military’s Z symbol. “Putler assassin,” says another sign that the Russians unsuccessfully tried to scrub away, using a common Ukrainian epithet that combines the Russian president’s name with Hitler.

The district headquarters on Kupyansk’s main square is still adorned with the billboard saying “We are one people with Russia.” The building was abandoned in haste as Ukrainian soldiers approached, with uneaten watermelon and undrunk coffee still in mugs sitting on the desks of collaborators appointed by Russia. Its rooms, with their blown-out windows, are filled with the detritus of failed Russian ambitions.

There are unpacked stacks of educational posters and Russian-language teaching aids for the schools that were meant to switch to Russian and reopen under the Russian curriculum this month.

Plastic-wrapped Russian flags of all sizes, some of them strewn on the grass outside. Correspondence from Russia’s ruling party, portraits of President Vladimir Putin, stacks of Russian coins—and thick binders with the names of local residents who received the monthly 10,000-ruble, equivalent to \$172, pensions from Kupyansk’s new rulers.

When the Russian soldiers escaped two weeks ago, so did most prominent collaborators. Yet, even the Russian troops weren’t all able to retreat in time. Yan, the International Legion company commander, said his unit captured 17 prisoners of war in Kupyansk this month. On Friday, a Ukrainian pickup truck rolled up to the bridge with yet another POW in the back.

Two Ukrainian medics walked the Russian soldier, blindfolded and wearing civilian clothes, across the narrow remaining part of the bridge, to an ambulance waiting to pick him up on the other side.

“Where are you from?” one of them said.

“Belgorod,” replied the soldier, from Russia’s 200th Motor Rifle Brigade. The city is located a short drive from Kharkiv, and it used to be common for Russians from Belgorod to come to Kharkiv for a weekend of shopping and entertainment.

“Ah, neighbors! Have you been to Kharkiv before the war?” a Ukrainian soldier asked him.

“Of course,” the Russian prisoner replied.

“Did you see any Nazis there?”

“No,” the Russian prisoner mumbled. “I did not.”

“Then why the hell did you come here to fight?” the Ukrainian soldier cursed. There was no reply. Minutes later, a different team of medics patched up the prisoner’s flesh wound and took him away from the front lines.

Some of the Russian soldiers hid in gardens behind Natalia Somova’s house when a Ukrainian patrol stopped by, asking for water. “We told our boys where these animals are hiding, and then 40 minutes later our own house was shelled,” Ms. Somova said, showing the broken windows from a nearby impact.

“The truth is that some people were giving the Russian soldiers shelter,” she added. “There were many people here for Russia, and they still are, hoping that Russia returns.”

While the Russian takeover of Kupyansk in February was largely bloodless, the city now is subjected to frequent Russian shelling. As a result of the destruction in the past two weeks, there is no electricity, no running water, no gas, no cellphone coverage—and no income.

“To tell you the truth, it was better under the Russians. We had peace, we had stability, we could look forward the future,” said a nurse in the Kupyansk hospital, who gave her name as Marina.

While her Ukrainian prewar salary was roughly \$200 monthly, she made nearly \$700 under the Russians, she said, as she and her husband picked up netting abandoned by Russian troops outside the ruins of a compound that used to house Russia’s FSB intelligence service.

“We used to live in peace, and now every day there are bombs after bombs. Our nerves can’t survive that,” said Alla Kolomiitseva, an 80-year-old retiree in east Kupyansk.

She said she didn’t care under whose authority she lived—Russia’s or Ukraine’s.

“I hope they find some agreement. For people like us, it doesn’t matter if a goat or a ram is in power, the sheep will follow him quietly anyway.”

Mr. Kanashevych, the head of the district administration, said the Ukrainians will rebuild all the infrastructure as soon as the security situation permits it.

“We are liberating the city first,” he said. “Before the Russians showed up, everything worked just fine.”

The absence of basic utilities means that residents of Kupyansk’s many high-rises have to cook on open fires in the courtyards. That is dangerous business. Unemployed construction worker Pavel Ryazanov had just started a fire to prepare a meal when a Russian shell slammed into the ground a few meters away on Wednesday. “My ears ringing, I had just about enough time to run and jump into the basement before the next one,” he said. “I can say, I am so lucky—this was my second birthday.”

Mr. Kostenko, the truck driver, was less fortunate. On Wednesday, he said, a Russian shell that probably was aimed at a nearby Ukrainian pontoon crossing hit the home of his 24-year-old son, Oleh, in eastern Kupyansk. Oleh died instantly. “The lower part of the body was intact, and the head—there was nothing left anymore,” Mr. Kostenko said.

Mr. Zdorikov, the neighbor who once served in the border guards, pointed at a fresh crater at their street corner. It was caused by a Russian shell Friday morning. “We’ve never heard anything that loud,” he said.

When the Russian soldiers rolled into Kupyansk, they didn’t show much hostility to ordinary people like him, he mused. “But now, Russia is showing everyone its true face.”

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HEADLINE	09/26 Russia war to cost global economy \$2.8T
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russias-war-in-ukraine-to-cost-global-economy-2-8-trillion-oecd-says-11664177401?mod=hp_lead_pos10
GIST	<p>Russia’s invasion of Ukraine will cost the global economy \$2.8 trillion in lost output by the end of next year—and even more if a severe winter leads to energy rationing in Europe—the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development said Monday.</p> <p>The estimate by the Paris-based club of advanced economies lays bare the magnitude of the economic fallout from Moscow’s invasion of its neighbor seven months ago, the worst military conflict on the continent since World War II, which is Russia’s attempt to redraw the map of Europe by force.</p> <p>Russia’s attack has sparked a surge in energy prices that has weakened household spending and undermined business confidence, particularly in Europe. The conflict has dislocated supply chains, caused shortages of food and other essentials and shaken markets across the globe.</p>

Western governments fear that Russia's order of a partial mobilization and its preparations to annex swaths of Ukraine could prolong the conflict for many months, perhaps years, further fueling the uncertainty now weighing on the global economy.

"We are paying a very hefty price for the war," said Álvaro Santos Pereira, the OECD's acting chief economist.

In its latest forecasts, the OECD said the global economy was set to grow by 3% this year and 2.2% next year. Before the war, it had expected growth of 4.5% in 2022 and 3.2% in 2023.

The difference between those two estimates means that the war and its consequences will have cost the world the equivalent of the economic output generated by the entire French economy over those two years.

The OECD expects the eurozone economy to grow by just 0.3% in 2023, with Germany's economy set to contract by 0.7%. When it last released forecasts in June, the research body expected to see growth of 1.6% in the eurozone and 1.7% in Germany.

The OECD warned that Europe's economy could suffer an even sharper downturn if energy prices were to rise again. Should natural-gas prices rise by 50% over the remainder of the year, European economic output could be 1.3% lower in 2023, while the global economy would grow by just 1.7%.

"Europe would be in recession," Mr. Pereira said.

Such a surge in prices could arise if Europe faces energy shortages over the coming winter, driven by particularly low temperatures. To reduce that risk, the OECD estimates that energy consumption will need to fall by between 10% and 15% compared with recent years.

"It's important not only to focus on supplies, it's important to make sure that there is a reduction in demand over the next few months," Mr. Pereira said.

Governments around Europe have spent billions of euros to help households and businesses weather the surge in energy costs. Some of that help has come in the form of caps on energy prices. But those caps weaken the incentive for households to cut consumption.

"Price caps might be appealing in the short run, but they are expensive and they distort price signals," Mr. Pereira said. "If you want to save energy, higher prices mean less consumption."

The cost of supporting households and businesses is pushing government debts higher, and that has led to an increase in borrowing costs that may further weaken growth. To avoid further big rises in debt, the OECD said that help should be targeted at the most vulnerable households.

It estimates that the 35 governments whose policies it tracks have committed to spending roughly \$150 billion on broad-based measures to keep prices down through December of this year, compared with around \$15 billion on more targeted price measures.

The OECD lowered its forecast for U.S. economic growth in 2023 to 0.5% from 1.2% previously, but said a steeper slowdown is possible if inflation doesn't fall as rapidly as the Federal Reserve hopes.

The organization expects China's economy to rebound modestly in 2023 from sluggish growth in 2022 that reflects lockdowns to contain the Covid-19 pandemic. In June, the OECD forecast growth of 4.4% in 2022, but now expects to see an expansion of just 3.2%. For 2023, it projects growth of 4.7%.

	“The forecast for this year is for the lowest growth since the 1970s, with the exception of the pandemic,” said. Mr. Pereira. “Next year, we expect growth that is still significantly lower than has been registered in China for a long time.”
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HEADLINE	09/25 Running short of land for housing
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-u-s-is-running-short-of-land-for-housing-11664125841?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos2
GIST	<p>In the Sunbelt, the hottest commodity isn't oil, copper or gold. It is land. And rancher Robert Thomas has plenty of it.</p> <p>Mr. Thomas's family owns about 11,000 acres of ranchland northeast of Tampa, Fla. His grandfather, who owned newspapers and ran a minerals-exploration business, bought much of it for 10 cents an acre in 1932. Since then, the population of the Tampa metropolitan area has exploded to more than 3 million. The Thomas family's ranch is now surrounded by communities of single-family homes.</p> <p>Home builders, hungry for land, have offered to buy Mr. Thomas's land. The family sold part of its holdings last year to a developer for about \$70 million, or about \$20,000 per acre, according to property records. Developers are now offering more than twice as much for some of his remaining land, Mr. Thomas said.</p> <p>Tampa-area land prices are “booming right now like nothing I’ve ever seen,” he said. “And I’ve been in charge here for 44 years.”</p> <p>The United States, a country of wide open spaces, is short on land.</p> <p>Or at least land where people can live. Land-use restrictions and a lack of public investment in roads, rail and other infrastructure have made it harder than ever for developers to find sites near big population centers to build homes. As people keep moving to cities such as Austin, Phoenix and Tampa, they are pushing up the price of dirt and making the housing shortages in these fast-growing areas even worse.</p> <p>In the Sunbelt, the average price of vacant land per acre more than doubled in the past two years through the second quarter, according to Land.com, a land-listing website owned by real-estate firm CoStar Group.</p> <p>The Federal Reserve's efforts to fight inflation might bring prices down. Higher interest rates and construction costs are already weighing on the land market, brokers say, and other parts of the real-estate market are starting to slow. While land prices haven't fallen, there are fewer bidders on deals. Some landowners worry about a downturn similar to the 2008 financial crisis, when home and land values plummeted after years of debt-fueled excess.</p> <p>Still, the lack of supply and the strong demand mean land prices will likely continue to rise in the long term, economists and investors say.</p> <p>Even in cities such as New York and San Francisco, where populations shrank during the pandemic, land is far more expensive today than it was decades ago. U.S. residential land alone is now estimated to be worth more than \$20 trillion, according to Morris Davis, a professor of finance at Rutgers Business School who studies land values.</p> <p>This historic land boom has provided a windfall for homeowners. Land now accounts for 47% of U.S. home values, estimates Mr. Davis. That is up from 38% in 2012 and less than 20% in the early 1960s. The rising value of land is responsible for almost all of the surge in home values in recent decades, he said.</p> <p>Few places have seen land values rise more sharply than Tampa's exurbs. When Mr. Thomas's grandfather bought the family ranch during the Great Depression, he was the only bidder. “It didn't have a</p>

tree big enough for a bird to build a nest in,” Mr. Thomas, 66, said. “It was just a chunk of sand in a godforsaken wilderness in Florida.”

According to family lore, the bank that oversaw the ranch on behalf of an estate was so desperate to get rid of it that a banker urged Mr. Thomas’s reluctant grandfather to make an offer. “He said 10 cents an acre, and the banker slammed his fist on his desk and said ‘sold! You could have had it for a nickel,’ ” Mr. Thomas said.

Even after factoring in another \$5 an acre in back taxes owed on the land, it was still a bargain, Mr. Thomas said.

Over the years, the family bought additional land around the ranch. Today, much of the property is densely forested. Cows laze in the shade of moss-covered oak trees while white-tailed deer pass through the bushes.

Increasingly, it is a green oasis surrounded by construction sites. As Mr. Thomas drove down a road near his ranch in his pickup truck on a recent Thursday, he could see dozens of two-story homes rising in neat rows. “You can reach out your window and tap on your neighbor’s window,” he said.

Asking prices for homes in these new communities go as high as \$900,000, in part because the land underneath is so valuable. That has a lot to do with land-use regulations.

Tampa’s zoning rules prevent developers from building anything larger than a single-family home in much of the city. When officials for Hillsborough County, which includes Tampa, adopted zoning regulations in 1950, they said the measures were necessary to prevent overcrowding and traffic jams and would preserve the neighborhood character, all “with a view to conserving the value of buildings,” according to the regulations.

Not only did these restrictions help maintain home values, they boosted the price of developable land. Because developers can’t stack homes on top of each other, they need more land for each housing unit. That is driving demand for land, pushing up prices.

It is also forcing builders to look for lots farther away from the city, where they run into new restrictions. Hillsborough County in late 2019 put a moratorium on the rezoning of land for housing in some areas in a bid to rein in new development. The move followed antidevelopment protests from residents who said local infrastructure couldn’t keep up with the region’s growth.

Pasco County, to the city’s north, in 2021 also put a moratorium on rezoning to multifamily use in some areas.

Between early 2021 and early 2022, home prices in the Tampa metropolitan area rose by 35%, according to the S&P CoreLogic Case-Shiller Index, the fastest increase of any of the 20 metro areas tracked.

Because much of the Thomas land, which is only a half-hour drive from downtown Tampa, is already zoned for housing, it is in high demand. Builders are competing for a piece of it. “I get letters, I get emails, I get calls,” Mr. Thomas said. “Somehow people got my cellphone number.”

Since 1932, the value of the Thomas family’s land, adjusted for inflation, has increased almost 200-fold, based on the price of last year’s sale. That is about 10 times the inflation-adjusted growth of the S&P 500 stock market index, which increased about 20-fold during that period.

Inadequate infrastructure is also boosting land inflation. In Nashville, for example, commutes have been getting longer as the population grows and traffic jams worsen, U.S. census data shows. A lack of public transit means commuters often have little choice but to inch down clogged roads. In 2018, voters rejected a proposal to build a light-rail system and expand bus service. That is putting a premium on scarce land close to the city center.

Lisa Maki, a principal at commercial real-estate brokerage Avison Young in Nashville, said her team last year arranged the sale of two lots in the city's booming Gulch neighborhood to a real-estate investment firm for \$7.1 million. The seller, a family from California, had bought the properties for \$1.1 million in 2011.

The number of vacant lots zoned for residential use in Nashville fell by 43.5% between 2016 and 2021, according to an analysis of public property records by real-estate data, technology and services firm Altus Group for The Wall Street Journal.

A shortage of development sites and surging land prices, plus high construction costs, mean developers haven't been able to build enough housing to keep up with demand. Apartment asking rents in Nashville rose 31% in the year ending in June, according to real-estate brokerage Redfin. The same phenomenon is playing out across the Sunbelt.

Five years ago, building apartments in the hottest Sunbelt markets was pretty easy, said Ryan Williams, executive chairman of real-estate investment firm Cadre.

"Now, almost across the board, you're fighting for land," he said. Bidding wars for vacant sites in cities such as Atlanta and Austin are common. Cadre recently looked at a lot in Tampa but didn't have time to get a bid in because another investor snapped it up without even visiting it, he said.

Increasingly, the company competes not just against other developers, but also against investors looking to buy lots and flip them for a profit or keep them unused, he said. "It's a literal land grab," Mr. Williams said.

Wealthy investors, including billionaire distiller Tito Beveridge and golfer Phil Mickelson, have started buying up land in the Sunbelt in recent years. Some investors keep land vacant for years, betting values will keep rising and taking advantage of favorable tax treatment for undeveloped land.

Land wasn't always so expensive. Until the second half of the 20th century, America's population was far more spread out, living where land was cheap. But as more people moved to a small number of cities with abundant office jobs, and municipalities passed stricter zoning codes that made it tougher to build housing, land prices and housing costs surged.

Land values in Manhattan barely increased between the 1880s and 1970s after adjusting for inflation, according to calculations by Jason Barr, an economist at Rutgers University-Newark. But between 1977 and 2019, they grew at an average annual rate of about 13%.

Most economists say municipalities need to relax zoning rules and other restrictions to bring down land inflation and build more housing. But these changes are often unpopular with homeowners, who benefit from rising land values and make up around 65% of U.S. households. Adding more housing also often requires costly investments in roads and other infrastructure.

People are still moving to Sunbelt cities, and zoning restrictions are unlikely to disappear soon. Remote work has given Americans more choice, but economists say most young professionals continue to flock to a small number of cities. Some think the Sunbelt could see the same kind of stubborn land inflation that has haunted New York and San Francisco for decades and made them among the country's least-affordable cities.

Once land inflation sets in, it can be hard to reverse. Landowners who think their property will become more valuable have little incentive to sell today, making it even harder for developers to find sites.

Mr. Thomas said his family has decided to keep its remaining land. Thanks to agricultural exemptions, his property taxes are low. The many offers he's recently received are tempting, he said, but if he sells, he would have to find a place to put his new money.

	“What are you going to do with what’s left that’s a better investment than just continuing to own the land?” he said.
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HEADLINE	09/25 Bolt Creek fire flares up; hot, dry conditions
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/residents-in-bolt-creek-fire-area-told-to-be-ready-to-evacuate/
GIST	<p>The Bolt Creek fire intensified Sunday, prompting authorities to raise the evacuation level to level 2 from Skykomish to Baring, King County. Level 2 means residents should be ready to leave on short notice.</p> <p>“As you may notice, there’s a lot of smoke in the sky,” Linda Lancaster, one of the public information officers with the Bolt Creek fire, said in a statement Sunday afternoon. “This hot, dry weather is causing the fire to kind of pick up in activity.”</p> <p>Firefighters have spent the past three weeks battling the fire and setting “control lines” with a series of “trigger points,” Lancaster said. “The fire’s kind of backing down the mountain today, and it has triggered one of those trigger points.”</p> <p>The level 2 evacuation applied from Beckler Road to Baring, said Andy Nesmith, another public information officer, Sunday afternoon. The department’s original notice misstated that the evacuation would apply to the entire fire area.</p> <p>The Bolt Creek fire ignited early on Sept. 10, spreading rapidly to 7,600 acres by the next day. It was an estimated 10,725 acres Sunday.</p> <p>The fire department’s decision to raise the evacuation level came the day after U.S. Highway 2 between Index and Skykomish reopened, unlocking a critical travel route that had been shut down for two weeks as crews fought to control the Bolt Creek fire.</p> <p>Lancaster said Sunday that firefighters were “working right up to the highway” and asked drivers to slow down.</p> <p>On Sunday evening, the fire department added parts of Snohomish County to the level 1 evacuation alert, meaning residents should be ready to go. South of U.S. 2, near Index, including Index Estates and the Lake Serene Trailhead, were added to a new level 1 evacuation alert. Index remained at a level 1 alert.</p> <p>Baring and Grotto, along U.S. 2 east to the Money Creek tunnel, remained on a level 2 evacuation alert, meaning residents should be set to leave on short notice. The department also maintained a level 3 alert — residents should go — from the west side of Money Creek tunnel to milepost 48, plus Forest Service Road 65.</p> <p>The department raised Skykomish from a level 1 to a level 2 alert on Sunday. It also added a level 1 alert for the area east of Skykomish, from the Beckler River to Forest Service Road 66 and north and south of U.S. 2, including Foss River Road.</p> <p>“Residents in the area should remain vigilant,” the department posted on Facebook Sunday evening. “The area remains hazardous. Conditions could change quickly, and evacuations may again become necessary.”</p>
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HEADLINE	09/25 Bellevue protest in solidarity Iran women
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/bellevue-protest-in-solidarity-with-iranian-women/
GIST	<p>Saghar Amini was arrested multiple times when she was a teenager living in Iran for violating the strict religious dress code. She said she would tuck her hijab behind her ear to prevent it from falling off.</p> <p>“I was arrested several times just for having my ear out,” she said.</p>

She also was arrested when she was 17 for being around men without wearing her hijab. Amini said she was in a house — not in a public place — but was still arrested, and authorities sentenced her to 60 lashes.

“It’s not just when you’re walking on the street; it’s what happens in your home, too,” Amini said.

Her case was later postponed, and she left Iran when she was 18 years old. Now she’s leading and organizing protests to support the rights of Iranian women.

Hundreds of people gathered in Bellevue on Sunday afternoon in multiple demonstrations to protest the death of 22-year-old Iranian Mahsa Amini who was [detained on Sept. 13](#) by her government. She died three days later in police custody. Mahsa Amini was held by the morality police for allegedly wearing her hijab too loosely and tight pants, a violation of laws dictating women in public wear the Islamic headscarves and loose clothing.

“Almost all the women who have come here from Iran and who have lived and grew up in Iran have gone through similar situations,” said Saghar Amini, who is not related to Mahsa Amini. “Maybe they haven’t been killed, but they have been arrested. They have walked in the streets of Iran with the anxiety of getting arrested or being thrown in jail.”

Authorities said Mahsa Amini wasn’t harmed and died of a heart attack. That was disputed by her family, which led to a public outcry. Activists have said she was beaten in the head with a baton and suffered other serious injuries that put her in a coma.

“Seeing her murder, I couldn’t sleep or eat for days, and it was just the trauma that was coming back,” Saghar Amini said. “It was a lot more than anger and frustration at that point because it has been going on for so long, and women have been the most oppressed under the Iranian regime.”

And it’s not only Iranians who must follow such laws. Nilofar Ehrari, who participated in Sunday’s demonstrations, is from Afghanistan and visited Iran when she was 13 years old. During the visit, she said she was approached multiple times by the morality police for not wearing her hijab properly. She said she was scared of being taken by authorities.

“Whatever is happening to women in Iran is exactly what’s happening to women in Afghanistan,” Ehrari said. “I felt the need to come out and raise ... women’s voices to bring equality in the world.”

[Hundreds of people](#) in Iran have been protesting in dozens of Iranian cities. [At least nine protesters](#) have been killed, and Iranian authorities have responded with guns, beatings and telecommunication shutdowns in unsuccessful efforts to end the protests.

Saghar Amini said this protest feels different. “This time we are too loud for the world not to do anything, and we will continue to be loud until they do something.”

The people who gathered Sunday afternoon were there in solidarity with Mahsa Amini and the protesters in Iran. Groups gathered near the Bellevue Downtown Park and on the corner of Northeast Eighth Street and 112th Avenue. Protesters chanted in English and in Farsi saying, “Women like freedom!” “No to the Islamic Republic!” and “Be the voice of Iran!”

Camelia Espahbod, who is from Iran and was among protesters, said women in Iran are treated as second-class citizens, and it’s been going on for a long time. “I think we’re having a George Floyd moment — enough is enough. Unfortunately, we’re not there to help Iranians, but this is the least we could do for them. I admire them for their bravery.”

Iran is also facing [global criticism](#) because the protests began there, but Iranian authorities have brushed it off as politically motivated. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has called on the Iranian government to allow peaceful protests and put an end to the persecution of women.

	<p>The U.S. government imposed sanctions on Iran’s morality police and leaders of other government agencies last week.</p> <p>People take for granted their freedoms in the United States, Espahbod said. In Iran, she said, she would stress over what to wear outside the house to avoid being harassed. She said she appreciates the freedoms she now has as a woman in the United States, and she wants that for everyone.</p> <p>“I have experienced the brutality firsthand,” Espahbod said. “I know what they are going through.”</p>
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HEADLINE	09/25 Chinatown ID homeless shelter expansion?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/chinatown-international-district-pushes-back-at-expanded-homeless-shelter-officials-ask-where-else/
GIST	<p>Advocates for Seattle’s Chinatown International District and officials from King County agree on two points: the region’s homelessness is at a crisis, and Chinatown International District does not feel safe to its residents.</p> <p>Tents are clustered underneath and around the Interstate 5 bridge on South King Street, and wooden boards that went up during 2020 have stayed up, creating the look of a neighborhood under siege, even as crowds wait on the sidewalk for tables at restaurants and residents play pingpong in the park.</p> <p>King County is expanding an existing shelter in north Sodo, bordering the Chinatown International District, in part to help alleviate issues there by bringing those living on the neighborhood’s streets inside.</p> <p>That will create one of the region’s largest hubs for social services with a total of 419 beds, adding room for RVs, tiny homes and mental health and addiction treatment to a neighborhood that already has a concentration of shelter and low-income housing. The \$66.5 million it will cost to build and operate the hub for five years is paid for primarily by the American Rescue Plan.</p> <p>The county wants to start opening the expanded services this fall, to work in concert with the King County Regional Homelessness Authority’s Partnership for Zero, a project to address people living outside in downtown Seattle and the Chinatown International District that’s just getting off the ground.</p> <p>But some in the Chinatown International District community are organizing to stop it.</p> <p>Efforts to block new homeless shelters are so common as to be routine both locally and across the country. But here, where a high number of homeless people and services are clustered in a low-income neighborhood of people of color, and where residents cite a history of being bulldozed in community discussions, the concerns are loaded with previous traumas.</p> <p>On Sept. 8, more than 100 people rallied in the Chinatown International District’s Hing Hay Park to oppose the project. When a similar protest marched to City Hall on Sept. 20, they were joined by president of the Seattle Police Officers Guild Mike Solan and members of the King County Republican Party who produced some of the picket signs. They read, “We want our say,” “Why us again?” and “Systemic racism must end.”</p> <p>History filled with hurt</p> <p>At the core of what Chinatown International District residents fear about the shelter expansion is how their neighborhood has already changed.</p> <p>“We feel intimidated and harassed and we don’t have our mental health,” said Qiu Fen Peng, 91, in Cantonese through a translator at the Hing Hay Park community meeting, describing how she and many elders feel while walking around the neighborhood.</p>

In the past several years, the neighborhood has experienced an increase in theft, break-ins and open-air drug markets, [according to business owners](#) who associate those issues with the rise of homeless people nearby. [Some restaurants in Little Saigon closed](#) after their owners said customers no longer felt safe to walk in the area.

[Police data](#) shows that some violent crimes have increased in 2021 and 2022, especially homicides and assaults, and property crime rates have largely stayed the same during the pandemic. Most research [does not prove](#) a connection between larger homeless encampments and increased property crime.

Elected officials like King County Councilmember Joe McDermott acknowledge that the sense of physical security in the neighborhood is “at an all-time low.”

Some residents say the Navigation Center, a 75-bed homeless shelter that opened in Little Saigon in 2017, exacerbated drug activity and related crime in a neighborhood that has long been a hot spot of homelessness dating back decades to “The Jungle,” a large series of past encampments south of the neighborhood.

For many in the community, the fight over the services hub is a product of institutional racism and feeling cut out of decisions.

Longtime neighborhood advocates say they have been “dumped on” since the placement of the Kingdome and Interstate 5 bisected the community, a pattern that many residents attribute to mostly white officials ignoring the voices of a community of mostly Asian Americans, many of whom are immigrants.

“They immediately roll over and play dead and plead ignorance and promise never to do it again,” said Chong Wa Benevolent Association co-chair Betty Lau. “But the damage is done.”

Those tensions again surfaced in 2017, when the Navigation Center was opened in Little Saigon despite community members saying they weren’t consulted then either.

Now, residents are pushing back on two fronts — a proposed [light rail station on Fifth Avenue](#) that could displace dozens of businesses — and this expanded shelter.

“We are committed to moving with haste”

It’s quiet inside the shelter in north Sodo that is causing all the stir.

A secured gate lines the perimeter of the 269-bed, 24/7 facility that occupies several large warehouses, some of which used to be a Tesla dealership.

The Salvation Army, which operates it, says a third of people staying there work jobs during the day, and all are required to abstain from alcohol and drugs and abide by a 9 p.m. curfew.

Data from the Seattle Police Department shows a 6% increase in 911 calls in the area of Chinatown International District closest to the shelter after it opened in November of 2020.

That’s why the neighborhood’s opposition to the expansion came as a surprise to King County Executive Dow Constantine.

The county says it reached out to 13 community organizations — half of which are based in the Chinatown International District — before the council voted in May to approve the lease for the services hub.

Residents have since been invited to sit on a formal work group around the project and can still influence the facility’s entry and exit points, security and lighting, and how many RVs can be there, the county said.

Seattle officials Mayor Bruce Harrell and Councilmember Tammy Morales, as well as county Councilmember McDermott, said they supported the county's efforts to both continue engaging the community and to bring more people inside.

Neighborhood advocates say the outreach was "too little, too late" and should have included a notice to each individual with language translation.

Organizers have asked for a six-month moratorium on the project for the county to do "proper outreach and engagement" with the community. The county says it can't ask people living outside to wait that long.

Officials contend the question shouldn't be whether the planned services hub is the perfect shelter in the perfect location, but whether it's better than the alternative.

"We know what not doing anything looks like," said Leo Flor, the county's director of Community and Human Services. "We don't have an option of not bringing more people inside."

An unmet need spills onto the streets

Constantine said nearly all of the county's shelter and housing projects have been met with some amount of community opposition, so it tries to strike a balance between the customarily lengthy community engagement process and the urgency of addressing the homelessness crisis.

"Every day that goes by people are languishing on the streets, and every day they languish on the streets, the situation gets worse," Constantine said. "We are committed to moving with haste, because people's lives are at stake here."

Service providers say that much of what people see as the most severe impacts of homelessness on a community are caused by people with untreated psychiatric needs or addiction issues.

That is likely true of the area around the Navigation Center said Dale Hayes, 51, who has been living there for the last several months. Hayes said the area is a hot spot for selling drugs and many of the people staying there are caught up in it.

Ever since the Downtown Emergency Service Center's main congregate shelter downtown closed down during the pandemic, Executive Director Daniel Malone said people with high behavioral needs have been missing a place to go. Many of those people have likely ended up outside, he said, which he thinks contributes to the sense that homelessness has gotten worse downtown and in nearby neighborhoods like Chinatown International District.

Phillip Daniels, 57, who has been sleeping outside in Little Saigon, said most people living outside in the neighborhood do so because "it's just kind of where they've been shoved to."

Malone and Constantine believe the Sodo Services Hub will help bring those people inside and alleviate their impact on the communities around them.

"We, of course, want the places that are hosting these to benefit from them," Constantine said.

How big is too big?

Advocates of the Chinatown International District argue that the small neighborhood of 3,000 to 4,000 people, where the average median income is about half what it is in the rest of the city, can only accommodate so many services and people.

The county's project will add an RV lot, an area for "pallet shelters" similar to tiny homes, a behavioral health center and a sobering center — 150 beds, bringing the total to 419.

Across the street from the services hub is the William Booth Center, a 152-bed homeless shelter that The Salvation Army has been operating since 1987. There is also the 75-bed Navigation Center and more than 100 units of permanent housing for formerly homeless people in the neighborhood.

The Regional Homelessness Authority was unable to say what the current distribution of shelter beds and services throughout the city looks like, a number that is often changing as facilities close or move. But CEO Marc Dones said homeless shelters have historically been “aggressively sited” in Pioneer Square and the Chinatown International District, while pointing out other neighborhoods like Magnolia have none.

“I don’t think it’s fair that we shoulder the city and the county’s homeless crisis,” said Tanya Woo, one of the primary organizers fighting the shelter expansion.

Woo also volunteers with Chinatown International District Community Watch, patrolling the neighborhood at night while often handing out food and water to homeless people.

Some homelessness experts say there are legitimate concerns with how large and clustered the services hub is.

“It risks becoming a dumping ground for homeless people,” said Stephen Metraux, a homelessness researcher at the University of Delaware, who says an overconcentration of homelessness in one area can come to define a place.

Metraux said that shelters have historically been concentrated either in low-income areas predominantly where people of color live, or in industrial areas; both are types of neighborhoods with little political capital to fight against projects.

For the sheltered and unsheltered people living in those areas, “destitution becomes more of the norm, and it becomes harder to escape,” Metraux said.

For similar reasons, the King County Regional Homelessness Authority is pushing to spread the region’s shelter and housing services more throughout the county.

“If we site things in more places, there’s less likelihood that we’ll see these significant concentrations of people because we won’t have forced them to all go to one place,” Dones said.

Dones declined to comment on the Sodo Services Hub, but an authority spokesperson implied the CEO’s comments largely don’t apply, saying the hub is in Sodo, an industrial area.

County Executive Constantine said the services hub is, in part, intentionally placed near the Chinatown International District, Pioneer Square, downtown and north Sodo “where homelessness is the most pronounced of any place in our region.”

He said he has learned most people living outside do not want to move away from the people they have relationships with and the places they’re familiar with. The tiny homes will first be offered to the people living in the encampment located where the hub will be built.

County officials have also been building or acquiring shelter and housing in many places, deliberately spread throughout the county. Through its Health Through Housing initiative, the county has purchased 10 hotels that will be turned into permanent supportive housing in places like Renton, Federal Way, Auburn, North Seattle, Queen Anne and Pioneer Square.

But in Chinatown, residents and business owners remain unconvinced that these efforts will help their community.

“They’ve already destroyed their credibility,” said advocate Lau, who grew up there.

HEADLINE	09/25 Oregon decriminalize hard drugs a failure?
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/critics-oregons-move-to-decriminalize-hard-drugs-a-failure-09-25-2022
GIST	<p>Salem, Ore. — Two years after Oregon residents voted to decriminalize hard drugs and dedicate hundreds of millions of dollars to treatment, few people have requested the services and the state has been slow to channel the funds.</p> <p>When voters passed the state's pioneering Drug Addiction Treatment and Recovery Act in 2020, the emphasis was on treatment as much as on decriminalizing possession of personal-use amounts of heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine and other drugs.</p> <p>But Oregon still has among the highest addiction rates in the country. Fatal overdoses have increased almost 20% over the previous year, with over a thousand dead. Over half of addiction treatment programs in the state lack capacity to meet demand because they don't have enough staffing and funding, according to testimony before lawmakers.</p> <p>Supporters want more states to follow Oregon's lead, saying decriminalization reduces the stigma of addiction and keeps people who use drugs from going to jail and being saddled with criminal records. How Oregon is faring will almost certainly be taken into account if another state considers decriminalizing.</p> <p>Steve Allen, behavioral health director of the Oregon Health Authority, acknowledged the rocky start, even as he announced a “true milestone” has been reached, with more than \$302 million being sent to facilities to help people get off drugs, or at least use them more safely.</p> <p>“The road to get here has not been easy. Oregon is the first state to try such a bold and transformative approach,” Allen told a state Senate committee Wednesday.</p> <p>One expert, though, told the lawmakers the effort is doomed unless people with addictions are nudged into treatment.</p> <p>“If there is no formal or informal pressure on addicted people to seek treatment and recovery and thereby stop using drugs, we should expect continuing high rates of drug use, addiction and attendant harm,” said Keith Humphreys, an addiction researcher and professor at Stanford University and former senior adviser in the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy.</p> <p>Of 16,000 people who accessed services in the first year of decriminalization, only 0.85% entered treatment, the health authority said. A total of 60% received “harm reduction” like syringe exchanges and overdose medications. An additional 15% got help with housing needs and 12% obtained peer support.</p> <p>The Drug Addiction Treatment and Recovery Act, also known as Measure 110, has become a campaign issue this year as Republicans seek to wrest the governorship from Democrats, who have held it since 1987.</p> <p>“I voted no on Measure 110 because decriminalizing hard drugs like heroin and meth was and is a terrible idea,” said GOP candidate Christine Drazan, who supports asking voters to repeal it. “As expected, it has made our addiction crisis worse, not better.”</p> <p>Unaffiliated candidate Betsy Johnson, a former veteran lawmaker, said she would work to repeal what she called a “failed experiment.”</p> <p>A spokeswoman for Democratic candidate Tina Kotek, a former House speaker, said Drazan and Johnson “want to go against the will of the voters. ... Oregonians do not want to go backward.”</p> <p>“As governor, Tina will make sure that the state is delivering on what voters demanded: expanded recovery services statewide,” spokeswoman Katie Wertheimer said.</p>

Under the law, people receive a citation, with the maximum \$100 fine waived if they call a hotline for a health assessment. But most of the more than 3,100 tickets issued so far have been ignored, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported. Few people have dialed the hotline.

Tera Hurst, executive director of Oregon Health Justice Recovery Alliance, which is focused on implementing Measure 110, said coerced treatment is ineffective. Hurst said it's important to focus on "just building a system of care to make sure that people who need access can get access."

Allen called the outlay of million of dollars — which come from taxes on Oregon's legal marijuana industry — a "pivotal moment."

"Measure 110 is launching and will provide critical supports and services for people, families and communities," he told the Senate committee.

It will take time, though, to use the funds to build out the services.

Centro Latino Americano, a nonprofit serving Latino immigrant families, plans to use its \$4.5 million share to move treatment services to a bigger space and hire more staff, said manager Basilio Sandoval.

"Measure 110 makes it possible for us to provide this service free of charge," Sandoval said. "This allows us to reach people we could not serve previously because of a lack of insurance."

Scott Winkels, lobbyist for the League of Oregon Cities, said residents are running out of patience.

"People are going to need to see progress," Winkels said. "If you're living in a community where you're finding needles, how many times do you need to see a needle in a park before you lose your cool?"

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HEADLINE	09/25 US warns Russia on nuclear weapons
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/25/us/politics/us-russia-nuclear.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — President Biden's national security adviser said on Sunday that the United States had warned Russia that there would be "catastrophic consequences" for the country if Moscow used nuclear weapons in its increasing desperation to hold on to territory in Ukraine, adding that in recent days the United States has "spelled out" how the world would react in private conversations with Russian officials.</p> <p>The adviser, Jake Sullivan, repeated the comments several times in three Sunday television interviews, though he left deliberately vague whether those consequences would be military, economic or diplomatic. Officials were quick to say they still had not seen any movement in Russia's stockpile of 2,000 or so small tactical weapons — which can be launched from a short- or medium-range missile — despite President Vladimir V. Putin's threats in a televised address last week that "this is not a bluff."</p> <p>But Mr. Sullivan's use of the word "catastrophic" as a deliberately ambiguous warning of a major — if almost certainly non-nuclear — response to a Russian nuclear detonation illustrated how quickly the rhetoric has intensified as Russia has faltered on the battlefield in recent months.</p> <p>In late May, Mr. Biden wrote a guest essay in The New York Times in which he said that "any use of nuclear weapons in this conflict on any scale would be completely unacceptable to us as well as the rest of the world and would entail severe consequences."</p> <p>American intelligence officials say they still believe the chances that nuclear weapons will be used in the conflict are low. But they believe those chances are significantly higher than they were in February and March because Mr. Putin has lost confidence in the ability of his ground troops to hold territory, much less take over Ukraine.</p>

Mr. Sullivan is a longtime student of nuclear escalation risks, and he has been walking a fine line between orchestrating repeated warnings to the Russians and avoiding statements that could prompt Moscow to raise the stakes, perhaps by beginning to move weapons toward the border in a menacing show of seriousness.

He indicated as much on ABC's "This Week" on Sunday. "We have communicated to the Russians what the consequences would be," Mr. Sullivan said, "but we've been careful in how we talk about this publicly, because from our perspective we want to lay down the principle that there would be catastrophic consequences, but not engage in a game of rhetorical tit for tat."

The White House declined to say who in Russian leadership the officials had communicated with, or to characterize the Russian response. But even before Mr. Putin issued his latest threats last week, the White House and the Pentagon had quietly engaged in detailed tabletop exercises, senior officials say, to think through how the United States and its allies might react to a variety of provocations.

Those varied from a detonation over the Black Sea by Mr. Putin to the actual use of a weapon against a Ukrainian target. The first of those would be more akin to a North Korean nuclear test, intended as a warning shot. The second would be the first use of a nuclear weapon against a population since the United States bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

For months, administration officials have said they could think of almost no circumstances in which a nuclear detonation by Russia would result in a nuclear response. But there has been discussion of several non-nuclear military responses — using conventional weapons, for example, against a base or unit from which the attack originated, or giving the Ukrainian forces the weaponry to launch that counterattack. In the minds of many officials, any use of nuclear weapons would require a forceful military response.

But many of the options under discussion also involve nonmilitary steps, casting Mr. Putin as an international pariah who broke the nuclear taboo for the first time in 77 years. It would be a chance, some officials say, to bring China and India, along with much of Asia and Africa, into the effort to impose sanctions on Russia, cutting off some of the biggest markets that remain for its oil and gas.

Mr. Putin's nuclear threats have hung over the war from its opening days, when he publicly ordered that nuclear forces be placed on a heightened alert status. (There is no evidence it ever happened.) More recently the shelling, apparently by Russian forces, of Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant has [raised the specter of deliberately turning a commercial facility into a potential dirty bomb](#). Shelling near the plant has continued in recent days, though the reactors have now been shut down, lowering the risk of a runaway nuclear accident.

On Wednesday, for the first time in more than six months, Mr. Putin revived his nuclear threats, saying he could [use all arms available to him](#) in the war — remarks interpreted by officials in both Russia and the West as a veiled threat about the use of nuclear weapons.

"If Russia feels its territorial integrity is threatened, we will use all defense methods at our disposal, and this is not a bluff," he said. "Those who are trying to blackmail us with nuclear weapons should know that the winds can also turn in their direction."

Mr. Sullivan said in several interviews that he was [taking Mr. Putin's nuclear threats seriously](#) — saying at one point that the United States was preparing for "every contingency" in the conflict and working to deter Russia from using nuclear weapons.

"We do have the capacity to speak directly at senior levels and be clear about our messages to them," he said, adding: "Russia understands very well what the United States would do in response to nuclear weapons use in Ukraine because we have spelled it out for them."

Mr. Sullivan's message was echoed by Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken in an interview, broadcast Sunday evening on CBS's "60 Minutes," that was taped at the United Nations last week. Mr. Blinken said

the direct conversation with Russian leadership took place because “it’s very important that Moscow hear from us and know from us that the consequences would be horrific. And we’ve made that very clear.”

On NBC’s “Meet the Press,” Mr. Sullivan said there would be announcements in the coming days of new economic sanctions from the Group of 7 nations against Russia — including on Russian entities operating in other countries — in response to Moscow’s “sham” referendums in portions of Ukraine it is occupying. The voting, which ends early this week, is widely believed to be a pretext for Russia to annex those territories.

“We’ve been clear: We’re not going to stop or slow down our support to the Ukrainians, no matter what Putin tries to do with these fake elections and fake referenda and annexation,” Mr. Sullivan said on CBS News’s “Face the Nation.”

Ukrainian and Western officials believe that the rushed voting would open the door for Mr. Putin to claim that Kyiv’s defensive war was an attack on Russian territory.

On Sunday, President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine [reiterated that annexation](#) by Moscow would scuttle any fleeting hopes for a diplomatic resolution to the crisis.

Mr. Sullivan put it even more bluntly, citing plunging Russian troop morale and shortages of precision-guided weapons.

“What we are seeing are signs of unbelievable struggle among the Russians,” Mr. Sullivan said.

“You’ve got low morale, where the soldiers don’t want to fight. And who can blame them because they want no part of Putin’s war conquest.”

He continued: “You’ve got Russia disorganized and losing territory to a capable Ukrainian force. And you’ve got a huge amount of infighting among the Russian military leadership. And now the blame game has started to include these replacements.”

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HEADLINE	09/25 Ian could hit Florida as a major hurricane
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/article/tropical-storm-ian-hurricane.html
GIST	<p>Tropical Storm Ian, which formed late Friday over the central Caribbean Sea, strengthened on Sunday and was expected to become a hurricane near western Cuba before threatening Florida as a major hurricane this week, forecasters said.</p> <p>Forecasters said that Ian, which was about 390 miles southeast of the western tip of Cuba as of Sunday night, was expected to become a hurricane early Monday and a major hurricane on Tuesday. The storm, which carried winds of 65 miles per hour, was expected to strengthen rapidly on Monday and Tuesday.</p> <p>“Ian is going to be a large and powerful hurricane in the eastern Gulf of Mexico and spread its impacts over a large portion of the Florida peninsula,” Jamie Rhome, the acting director of the National Hurricane Center, said in a briefing on Sunday.</p> <p>A hurricane warning was in effect on Sunday for areas in western Cuba, which could see “life-threatening storm surge and hurricane-force winds” beginning on Monday, the Hurricane Center said. On Sunday night, the center issued a tropical storm warning for parts of the Florida Keys and a tropical storm watch for Florida’s west coast from Englewood to Chokoloskee.</p> <p>The center also issued a storm surge watch for parts of the Florida Keys and parts of the west coast of Florida. Forecasters warned that water could rise to several feet above ground in many areas if peak surge occurs during high tide, including up to seven feet from Englewood to Bonita Beach.</p>

Ahead of the storm, some school districts in Florida announced closures. [Hillsborough County Public Schools said](#) it had “no choice but to close schools” Monday through Thursday because county officials planned to use many schools as storm shelters starting on Monday. Pasco County Schools said schools and offices [would be closed](#) on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The Florida Keys could get two to four inches of rain, with some areas receiving up to six inches through Tuesday evening, [the Hurricane Center said](#), adding that flash and urban flooding could occur across the Keys and Florida peninsula. Flash flooding and mudslides are also possible in high terrain in Jamaica and Cuba.

At a [Sunday news conference](#), a day after declaring a state of emergency for [all of Florida’s 67 counties](#), Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida emphasized the continued uncertainty of the storm’s path.

“Just don’t think if you’re not in that eye, that somehow you don’t have to make preparations,” he said. He cautioned residents to anticipate possible power failures, fuel disruptions and evacuation orders.

While satellite imagery of Ian may not currently look “overly impressive,” that will change as the storm unfolds and become “a little unsettling as that satellite really builds out,” Mr. Rhome warned.

“A lot of people are going to run to the stores when they see that, so I stress that you use the rest of today to finalize your preparation while it’s calm,” he said.

“The surge vulnerability along the west coast of Florida is very extreme,” Mr. Rhome said, adding, “I’m telling you, it doesn’t take an onshore or direct hit from a hurricane to pile up the water.”

Kevin Guthrie, director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management, said at the news conference that as of Sunday afternoon the division had 360 trailers loaded with meals and water ready to distribute to residents.

President Biden [approved an emergency declaration for 24 Florida counties](#) that will unlock direct federal assistance.

Ian is expected to pass near or west of the Cayman Islands on Monday before moving near or over western Cuba late on Monday and early Tuesday, forecasters said.

Ian is expected to generate one to three inches of rain in Jamaica, three to six inches in the Cayman Islands, and six to 10 inches in western Cuba, with up to 16 inches possible, the center said.

This rainfall could lead to flash flooding and mudslides in higher terrain areas, particularly in Jamaica and Cuba, forecasters said.

As of Sunday night, a hurricane warning was in effect for Grand Cayman and the Cuban provinces of Isla de Juventud, Pinar del Rio, and Artemisa. A tropical storm watch was in effect for Little Cayman and Cayman Brac, and a tropical storm warning was in effect for the Cuban provinces of La Habana, Mayabeque and Matanzas.

Ian is the ninth named storm of the 2022 Atlantic hurricane season. A storm is given a name after it reaches wind speeds of at least 39 m.p.h.

The Atlantic hurricane season, which runs from June through November, [had a relatively quiet start](#), with only three named storms before Sept. 1 and none during August, the first time that had happened since 1997. Storm activity picked up in early September with [Danielle](#) and [Earl](#), which formed within a day of each other.

In early August, scientists at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [issued an updated forecast](#) for the rest of the season, which still called for an above-normal level of activity. In it, they

predicted that the season — which runs through Nov. 30 — could see 14 to 20 named storms, with six to 10 turning into hurricanes with sustained winds of at least 74 m.p.h.

Three to five of those could strengthen into what NOAA calls major hurricanes — Category 3 or stronger — with winds of at least 111 m.p.h.

Last year, there were 21 named storms, after [a record-breaking 30 in 2020](#). For the past two years, meteorologists have exhausted the list of names used to identify storms during the Atlantic hurricane season, an occurrence that has happened only one other time, in 2005.

The links between hurricanes and climate change have become clearer with each passing year. Data shows that [hurricanes have become stronger worldwide](#) during the past four decades. A warming planet can expect stronger hurricanes over time and a higher incidence of the most powerful storms, though the overall number of storms could drop because factors like stronger wind shear could keep weaker storms from forming.

Hurricanes are also becoming wetter because of increased water vapor in the warmer atmosphere; scientists have suggested storms like [Hurricane Harvey in 2017](#) produced far more rain than they would have without the human effects on climate. Also, rising sea levels are contributing to higher storm surge — the most destructive element of tropical cyclones.

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HEADLINE	09/25 Soviet monuments targets of backlash
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/25/world/europe/soviet-monuments-war.html
GIST	<p>REZEKNE, Latvia — Deported to Siberia by the Soviet secret police as a child and stranded there for more than a decade, Dr. Juris Vidins has for years cursed the large statue of a Red Army soldier looming over the center of his hometown in eastern Latvia. An inscription at its base honors the Soviet “liberators” who drove out the Nazis in 1944 — and who sent his father to a prison camp and the rest of the family to a frozen wilderness.</p> <p>“This was not liberation, but occupation,” Dr. Vidins, 84, said, glowering at the statue of a Soviet soldier cradling a machine gun.</p> <p>“They liberated me from my family, they liberated us from our property and everything we had,” he said. “If that is liberation, I don’t want a monument to it.”</p> <p>After trying in vain for years to get the statue torn down, the doctor is now rejoicing that, thanks to a wave of revulsion over Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and everything connected with its military, he may soon see his dream come true.</p> <p>Across Eastern and Central Europe, dominated by Moscow for nearly a half-century after the end of World War II, a long-running memory war over whether the Soviet Union liberated the region from fascism or enslaved it anew has reached a decisive turn, just as what had been a grinding military stalemate in Ukraine has turned significantly against Russian forces.</p> <p>Statues honoring Soviet troops have in recent weeks come down or been slated for demolition in Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and the Czech Republic, all NATO members that have rallied to help Ukraine on the battlefield with weapons and gone on the offensive at home against what they see as abhorrent tributes to Russian power.</p> <p>President Vladimir V. Putin’s invasion of Ukraine, justified by false claims that the country was awash with Nazis who must be crushed just as Hitler’s real Nazis were, has sapped his country’s military and economic strength. Mr. Putin has also drained its most potent source of moral and political legitimacy: Russia’s claim, as the Soviet Union’s successor state, to the respect due the more than 25 million Soviet citizens who died fighting Hitler’s Germany.</p>

“Monuments to a foreign army that has committed terrible crimes” have “no place in a democratic society,” President Egils Levits of Latvia said in an interview in Riga, the country’s capital.

Russia responded with fury last month when the authorities in Riga demolished a nearly 260-foot-tall obelisk that was built in 1985 as a memorial to Soviet soldiers killed during World War II. The Russian Foreign Ministry fired off a barrage of angry diplomatic complaints that Latvia, which has been free of domination by Moscow since the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, had violated a 1994 pledge to respect war memorials. The ministry’s spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, accused Baltic States of indulging in “neo-Nazi bacchanalia.”

“Of course, Russia tried to intimidate us by using the same vocabulary they used during Soviet times to justify deportations and repression,” Artis Pabriks, Latvia’s defense minister, said in an interview. “They want to scare us.”

The war in Ukraine has largely vindicated longstanding warnings by Baltic States that Russia is an aggressive power that cannot be trusted. But it has also blunted its capacity to terrify its neighbors, reducing the willingness of ethnic Russians abroad to rally publicly to Moscow’s side and exposing the weaknesses of its military machine.

“If they are not crazy, they will not try to touch us militarily,” said the Latvian defense minister, Mr. Pabriks. “Most of their troops next to us have now been sent to Ukraine,” he added, referring to soldiers previously massed along Russia’s western border who were redeployed.

The demolition of Soviet war monuments, he added, “is good and necessary” and means that “our Russian minority has a choice to make: They have to either support this country and be patriots or support Putin.”

“There will be zero tolerance of anyone supporting his war regime,” Mr. Pabriks said.

Many of the ethnic Russians living in Latvia, about a quarter of the country’s population, insist they want to keep the war monuments not out of support for Mr. Putin but to honor relatives who died fighting with the Soviet army.

But Russia has itself turned World War II into a political cult and touchstone of loyalty to the Kremlin. Instead of showing solemn reverence for those killed fighting the Nazis, Mr. Putin has exploited their memory to fortify his grip on power and demonize his foes as traitors and fascists.

A law adopted in June by Latvia’s Parliament prohibited the public display of “objects glorifying the Soviet and Nazi regimes” and ordered their removal by Nov. 15. The ban does not apply to cemeteries or war graves, only monuments to Soviet power, which first reached Latvia in 1940 with the arrival of the Red Army after a 1939 nonaggression pact between Stalin and Hitler that included a secret protocol carving up Poland and the Baltic States between Moscow and Berlin.

That occupation resulted in the arrest of Dr. Vidins’s father, also a doctor, and the deportation to Siberia of the rest of the family. More than 15,000 Latvians, including 2,400 children, were deported in 1941.

Soviet rule ended with the Nazi invasion of June 1941, which some Latvians greeted with relief. “Many people could not imagine that life could be worse under the Nazis than the Soviets,” said Gints Apals, the head of the history department at Latvia’s Occupation Museum, a national shrine to the country’s suffering under Soviet and Nazi rule.

There were more than 90,000 Jews in Latvia before World War II, but only a few hundred were left at the end of the Nazi occupation; most were killed, and many others fled.

The Red Army returned to Latvia in 1944 as it swept west toward Germany, and it rounded up thousands more for deportation. By 1949, around 42,000 people — more than 2 percent of the country’s population

— had been sent to Siberia, with thousands more executed and jailed as suspected “fascists” and Nazi collaborators. This second period of Soviet occupation continued until 1991.

Latvia’s official position, Mr. Apals said, is that “both totalitarian systems were equally bad,” not because they each killed the same number of people, but because “both used ideological mass murder.”

Saying that is illegal in Russia, where an opposition politician, Leonid Gozman, was jailed last week for a second time for stating that Stalin was “even worse” than Hitler.

Edgars Engizers, a historian who advises the Latvian Foreign Ministry, said that Mr. Putin’s politicization of history had squandered much of the respect once accorded Russia for its role in defeating the Nazis. Undermined by a torrent of “fake history,” Latvia’s previous tolerance of war monuments, he said, had been swamped by disgust at the Kremlin’s “ideologized cult of World War II.”

“The glorification of Russia’s military heritage has turned into a glorification of war crimes,” Mr. Engizers said.

When Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania broke away from the Soviet Union and regained their independence in 1991, they all quickly toppled statues of Lenin, the founder of the Soviet state, but left intact World War II monuments like the Riga obelisk and the statue in Rezekne.

This lingering respect for Soviet sacrifice in Latvia was swept aside in June with the new law.

Small pockets of resistance remain, particularly among the large ethnic Russian populations of places like Rezekne, Dr. Vidins’s hometown, and the eastern city of Daugavpils, Latvia’s largest concentration of ethnic Russians, which is hoping to protect its own World War II monument.

Aleksei Vasiliev, the first vice mayor of Daugavpils and head of the local chapter of the “Russian Union of Latvia,” said he owed it to relatives killed during the war to protect the monument, an unadorned metal spire that makes no mention of “liberation” by the Soviet Union. The city, claiming that the monument has artistic and cultural value, has appealed to the courts to try to save it from demolition.

“I will not lie down in front of bulldozers if they come, but I will kneel and pray that they stop,” Mr. Vasiliev said.

With the deadline for the demolition of their own monument approaching and the government in Riga threatening legal action against towns that disobey the prohibition law, municipal authorities in Rezekne recently conducted an online survey of public opinion, but got no clear answer: 52 percent said they wanted the statue dismantled, 43 percent said they did not and 4 percent said they wanted it moved from the central park.

Rezekne’s mayor, caught between the law and a divided public, has not yet said publicly what will happen to the statue.

Dr. Vidins said he was confident that the mayor would have to demolish it. “It should have gone long ago,” he said, “and I’m delighted that it will, I hope, soon go.”

But many local Russians, including an old friend of the doctor’s, Vadim Gilis, think that would be an assault on their own identities and the memory of Russia’s war dead.

On a visit to the town’s sprawling Jewish cemetery, Mr. Gilis pointed to a grassy riverbank where Nazi soldiers, helped by local collaborators, murdered thousands of Jews. “This is why Soviet soldiers came here,” he said. “But we are still all fighting over what happened in World War II.”

He said he respected Dr. Vidins and his position. “We get along well,” Mr. Gilis said. “Only when we start talking about history do all the problems start.”

HEADLINE	09/25 Renewed militia clashes western Libya
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/renewed-militia-clashes-rock-western-libya-child-killed-90508775
GIST	<p>CAIRO -- A new round of infighting between rogue militias in western Libya has killed at least five people, including a 10-year-old girl, health authorities said Monday, the latest bout of violence to rock the North African nation mired in decadelong chaos.</p> <p>The fighting broke out on Sunday between rival militias in the western town of Zawiya, where armed groups — like in many other towns and cities in oil-rich Libya — are competing for influence.</p> <p>Along with the five who were killed, at least 13 other civilians were wounded in the clashes that continued overnight, the Health Ministry's emergency services said.</p> <p>The fighting trapped dozens of families living in the area for hours, said Malek Merset, a spokesman for the emergency services. Local media reported that one militia fired at a member of its rivals, wounding a militiaman who was taken to hospital.</p> <p>The violence was the latest between militias in western Libya. In August, clashes in the capital of Tripoli killed more than 30 people, one of the deadliest bouts of fighting in Libya in many months.</p> <p>Libya was plunged into chaos after a NATO-backed uprising toppled and killed longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi in 2011. The oil-rich country has for years been split between rival administrations, each backed by rogue militias and foreign governments.</p> <p>Libya is now split between two rival administrations. One is that of the government of Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah in Tripoli who refused to step down after Libya failed to hold elections last year. A second administration is led Prime Minister Fathy Bashagha who operates from the eastern city of Benghazi after failed efforts to install his government in the capital.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/26 Drone attack sparks fire near Ukraine port
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/drone-attack-hits-ukraine-us-vows-consequences-nukes-90511543
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine -- An overnight drone strike near the Ukrainian port of Odesa sparked a massive fire and explosion, the military said Monday, hours after the United States vowed to take decisive action and promised "catastrophic consequences" if Russia uses nuclear weapons in Ukraine.</p> <p>The airstrike was the latest in a series of drone attacks on the key southern city in recent days. This one hit a military installation and detonated ammunition when it struck. Firefighters were struggling to contain the blaze, the Ukrainian military's southern command said.</p> <p>Concerns are growing that Russia may seek to escalate the conflict once it completes what Ukraine and the West see as illegal referendums in parts of Ukraine under its control.</p> <p>The voting, which ends Tuesday, happened after thousands of residents had fled and has included images of armed Russian troops going door-to-door to pressure Ukrainians into voting. Russia is widely expected to declare the results in its favor, a step that could see Moscow annex the territory and give it the pretext to seek to defend it as its own territory under the Russian nuclear umbrella.</p> <p>Jake Sullivan, the U.S. national security adviser, made clear that Russia would pay a high price if it made good on veiled threats to use nuclear weapons in the conflict.</p>

“If Russia crosses this line there will be catastrophic consequences for Russia. The United States will respond decisively,” he told NBC's Meet the Press on Sunday.

Washington's message has been more detailed in private conversations with their Russian counterparts, he said, without elaborating.

“So, the Russians understand where we are. We understand where we are. We are planning for every contingency” he said in separate comments to ABC's This Week. “And we will do what is necessary to deter Russia from taking this step.”

Elsewhere, a Russian rocket attack targeted a village in southeastern Ukraine. The attack struck an unnamed village and the regional center of Zaporizhzhia, regional military official Oleksandr Starukh said online.

He posted pictures of damaged buildings and said unspecified infrastructure also had been damaged and fires were sparked by the attack.

Meanwhile, the first batches of Russian troops mobilized by Moscow have begun to arrive at military bases, the British military said Monday.

In an online intelligence briefing, the British Defense Ministry said “many tens of thousands” had been called up. However, the Russians face challenges ahead.

“Unlike most Western armies, the Russian military provides low-level, initial training to soldiers within their designated operational units, rather than in dedicated training establishments,” the British said.

Under normal circumstances, two battalions deploy while a third remains behind to train. But in the Ukraine war, even the third battalion is deploying, weakening that training, the British said.

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HEADLINE	09/26 British pound plummets new lows US dollar
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/british-pound-plummets-lows-us-dollar-90512061
GIST	<p>LONDON -- The British pound fell to all-time low against the U.S. dollar early Monday after Treasury chief Kwasi Kwarteng pledged further tax cuts, fueling concerns about the government's economic policy.</p> <p>The pound fell as low as \$1.0373, before rallying to \$1.0672 in early London trading. It was its lowest level since the decimalization of the currency in 1971.</p> <p>The British currency has lost more than 5% against the dollar since Friday, when Kwarteng announced the biggest tax cuts in 50 years at the same that the government is planning to spending billions of pounds to help consumers and businesses struggling with high energy bills. That sparked investor concern about spiraling government debt.</p> <p>Kwarteng and Prime Minister Liz Truss, who took office three weeks ago, are betting that lower taxes and reduced bureaucracy will spur economic growth and generate enough additional tax revenue to cover government spending. Economists suggest it is unlikely the gamble will pay off.</p> <p>Opposition Labour Party economy spokeswoman Rachel Reeves said Kwarteng had “fanned the flames” of instability by talking up more tax cuts, and said the government's policies were “reckless.”</p> <p>When grilled about his economic policy on Sunday, Kwarteng said he believed the government was acting responsibly.</p>

	<p>“There’s more to come,” he said in an interview with the BBC. “We’ve only been here 19 days. I want to see, over the next year, people retain more of their income because I believe that it is the British people that are going to drive this economy.”</p> <p>At the same time it is cutting taxes, the government has announced plans to cap electricity and natural gas prices for homes and businesses to help cushion price rises triggered by the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>This program will cost 60 billion pounds, and the government will borrow to finance it, Kwarteng said Friday.</p> <p>He said Sunday this this was the right policy, because the government needed to help consumers squeezed by the unprecedented pressures caused by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Britain can afford this because its debt as a percentage of gross domestic product is the second lowest among the Group of Seven large industrial economies, Kwarteng said. The government will in the coming months announce plans for reducing the nation’s debt, he said.</p> <p>“Obviously, I will be setting out plans for the medium-term fiscal plan, as we’re calling it, that will show that we’re committed to net debt-to-GDP to be falling over time,” Kwarteng said.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/26 Powerful typhoon slams Philippines, 6 dead
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/powerful-typhoon-leaves-rescuers-dead-north-philippines-90503734
GIST	<p>MANILA, Philippines -- Typhoon Noru blew out of the northern Philippines on Monday, leaving six people dead, knocking down power in two entire provinces, trapping villagers in floods and forcing officials to suspend classes and government work in and around the capital.</p> <p>The most powerful typhoon to hit the country this year slammed ashore in Burdeos town in Quezon province before nightfall on Sunday then weakened as it barreled overnight across the main Luzon region, where more than 52,000 people were moved to emergency shelters, some forcibly, officials said.</p> <p>Gov. Daniel Fernando of Bulacan province, north of Manila, said five rescuers, who were using a boat to help residents trapped in floodwaters, were hit by a collapsed wall then apparently drowned in the rampaging waters.</p> <p>“They were living heroes who were helping save the lives of our countrymen in the calamity,” Fernando told DZMM radio network. “This is really very sad.”</p> <p>Police said a Bulacan villager drowned after refusing to heed appeals to leave his riverside house. Authorities were separately trying to confirm another death in Burdeos town and a missing farmer in a flooded village in western Zambales province.</p> <p>In Aurora province's hard-hit Dingalan town, more than 6,000 houses were damaged and a newly built evacuation center housing more 200 displaced families was battered by the fierce wind and rain but no injuries were reported, officials said.</p> <p>About 3,000 people were evacuated to safety in metropolitan Manila, which was lashed by fierce wind and rain overnight. Classes and government work were suspended Monday in the capital and outlying provinces as a precaution although the morning skies were sunny.</p> <p>The entire northern provinces of Aurora and Nueva Ecija, which were hit by the typhoon, remained without power Monday and repair crews were at work to bring back electricity, Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla told President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in a televised meeting the president called to assess damage and coordinate disaster-response.</p>

Marcos Jr. praised officials for evacuating tens of thousands of people before the typhoon hit, preventing more deaths, but expressed concern at how Noru and another storm that devastated central and southern provinces in December rapidly intensified into super typhoons.

“Is this climate change?” Marcos Jr., who took office in June, asked. “We have kept watched on these storms for a long time but it wasn’t like this before... This is something I have to deal with.”

Marcos Jr. later joined an aerial inspection of typhoon-hit provinces in the rice-growing region, where many villages and stretches of roads remained flooded.

Noru underwent an “explosive intensification” over the open Pacific Ocean before it hit the Philippines, Vicente Malano, who heads the country’s weather agency, told The Associated Press on Sunday.

From sustained winds of 85 kilometers per hour (53 mph) on Saturday, Noru was a super typhoon just 24 hours later with sustained winds of 195 kilometers (121 miles per hour) and gusts of up to 240 kph (149 mph) at its peak late Sunday.

By Monday noon, Noru had sustained winds of 130 kph (81 mph) and gusts of 160 kph (99 mph) and was moving northwest in the South China Sea toward Vietnam, according to the weather agency.

About 20 storms and typhoons batter the Philippines each year. The archipelago also lies in the “Pacific Ring of Fire,” a region along most of the Pacific Ocean rim where many volcanic eruptions and earthquakes occur, making the Southeast Asian nation one of the world’s most disaster-prone.

In 2013, Typhoon Haiyan, one of the strongest recorded tropical cyclones in the world, left more than 7,300 people dead or missing, flattened entire villages, swept ships inland and displaced more than 5 million in the central Philippines — well to the south of Noru’s path.

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HEADLINE	09/25 Seattle council abandons defund police?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/50-was-a-mistake-how-seattle-city-council-abandoned-the-idea-of-defunding-police/
GIST	<p>When the Seattle City Council approved hiring bonuses of up to \$30,000 for police in August, constituents lamented largely unfulfilled promises of police reform made by the council two years ago.</p> <p>“In Summer 2020, many of you committed to shifting police funds into other city services that could serve as alternates to policing, yet that shift hasn’t really happened at scale,” Bryan Clark, a Ballard resident, told council before the Aug. 16 vote.</p> <p>Clark was one of about 20 residents to call the council to voice his opposition to the police bonuses before council approved them 6-3. Some of those callers criticized the council for straying from promises to divest from the Seattle Police Department.</p> <p>On the heels of weeks of sustained protests against police brutality, spurred by the police killing of George Floyd in May 2020, a majority of the Seattle City Council committed to a series of police reform ideas proposed by activists, including cutting the city’s then-\$409 million police budget in half. The money divested from SPD was to be spent on alternative responses to some emergency calls and other community services.</p> <p>But it never happened.</p> <p>Two years since the commitment was made, the department’s budget has been reduced by roughly 13% — primarily by moving \$45.4 million in traffic enforcement, 911 dispatch and other services out of SPD’s</p>

budget and into those of other departments — and most council members now denounce the idea of defunding the police, focusing instead on finding alternative responses to emergency calls.

“An uphill battle”

Seattle’s defunding plan drove a wedge between the council and then-Mayor Jenny Durkan, potentially contributing to the resignation and retirement of more than 400 sworn SPD staff members over the past two years and drawing international interest from critics and supporters of sweeping police reform.

“We knew that it was going to be an uphill battle, but we made that demand because it’s a common sense demand,” Angélica Cházaro, a lead organizer of Decriminalize Seattle. She continues to advocate alongside other community organizations for the “Solidarity Budget,” which would take money from SPD to fund housing, traffic and environmental projects, and other areas of public safety.

“While the city leaders have lost that thread, community members haven’t, which is why we see now, for the third year in a row, so much energy around the generation of Solidarity Budget vision,” she added, “where people understand that spending nearly a quarter of our city’s general funds on police and police pensions is not generating the kind of safety we want.”

What changed?

In 2020, then-Council President M. Lorena González and current Councilmembers Lisa Herbold, Andrew Lewis, Tammy Morales, Teresa Mosqueda, Kshama Sawant and Dan Strauss gave varying degrees of credence to defunding.

At the pinnacle of council support in July 2020, the seven council members [had endorsed a reform outline](#) by activist groups Decriminalize Seattle and King County Equity Now, which called for the council to make the 50% cut from SPD to fund affordable housing and community-led public safety efforts, among other things. But even then, the level of commitment varied.

On one end of the spectrum was Sawant, who vehemently supported the plan, and the protesters calling for reform, whom [she escorted into City Hall](#) and joined on a [march to Durkan’s house](#). Early that July, Mosqueda, Morales and González joined in full-throated support of the defunding plan.

Morales said in July 2022 she still supports divesting from SPD to invest in these alternative responses and other human services, but she doesn’t know what the right amount of cuts would be.

Morales says there’s a “real disconnect” in the city’s budget if a department with a budget as large as SPD’s cannot solve the public safety issues at hand.

Sawant still advocates for SPD divestments and other reforms favored by activists in 2020, with no discernible change from 2020.

“Outrageously, the Seattle Police Department continues to be, by far, the biggest part of Seattle’s discretionary budget,” Sawant said in an August email. “I believe those resources would be far more effectively invested in things that reduce inequality like affordable housing, and furthermore, we need to increase the Amazon Tax that working people and the [Black Lives Matter] movement won in 2020.”

On the other side, Councilmember Alex Pedersen and now-Council President Juarez have consistently rejected the idea of defunding SPD since 2020.

“I was upfront and clear that I opposed the 50% cut because that percentage was arbitrary and because dramatically defunding does not ensure justice, or improve safety,” Pedersen said this summer.

Juarez, who did not respond to requests for comment for this story, described the idea as “an empty and misleading slogan,” as the council formed the 2021 budget, adding that “it caused damage, it caused pain, it caused trauma.”

City voters reinforced this perspective in 2021, decidedly [electing Bruce Harrell](#) — a moderate former City Council president determined to [bolster the “depleted and demoralized” Police Department](#) in the name of public safety — as mayor over González, the progressive council president who advocated for divesting from and reforming the department.

Voters also chose Sara Nelson, whose campaign hinged on [denouncing defunding proposals and protecting local businesses](#). She was elected to fill the seat González vacated, adding a third council voice to Juarez and Pedersen’s policing perspective.

The shift in council sentiment comes largely from those in between.

Herbold and Lewis signed on to the idea of defunding, with Herbold drafting but never introducing a proposal to reduce SPD’s remaining 2020 budget by half.

“On Twitter, I just responded to a bunch of people who are tweeting at me and said I’m going to make a proposal for a 50% cut,” Herbold explained in July. “It was never a proposal on paper. It was never a piece of legislation.”

“It was never an amendment; it was sort of the framework for what could have, if it was realistic, become an amendment,” she added.

Later in 2020, Herbold and others strayed from the defunding goal, instead passing more modest reductions to SPD’s budget and implementing provisos in 2021 and 2022 that [prohibited the department from spending millions of dollars budgeted for salaries of unfilled positions](#).

Herbold said committing to the cut, even though she changed her mind, was important to signal the intent of the council.

“It’s impossible, in my experience, to challenge the status quo if you limit your actions to only what is considered realistic,” she said. “I think many of our objectives when signing on to a goal was not so much about whether or not the goal was realistic, it was about recognizing that you have to reach in order to even make a small change.”

Lewis, who also abandoned the original pledge, says that committing to “50% was a mistake.”

“One regret that I have is, in retrospect, I never would have assigned a percentage,” Lewis explained, saying that he thinks committing to a specific figure has “distracted” from implementing alternative responses and other police reforms.

Strauss says he never explicitly supported the 50% defund, but was willing to explore it. In 2020, he [tweeted](#) that he was in “100% agreement” with the Decriminalize Seattle plan, urging the council to “define” how the 50% cuts would occur.

Now he shares a similar view to Herbold and Lewis, noting in July that “successes [would be] when you call 911, there’s a fast response 24/7, and the appropriate first responder arrives quickly with the resources they need to be successful.”

What’s next?

While the 50% cut is not likely to happen with the current council, all members, the mayor and even the incoming chief of police say they support some form of policing alternatives.

According to Lewis, the city needs to come up with a comprehensive alternative response plan to handle homelessness, mental health, addiction and some other crisis response outside of SPD, emphasizing social work, as in cities like [Denver](#) and [Eugene, Oregon](#).

“What we just need to do is have a consensus between mayor and council, which I think we’re working on that, that really makes it clear, you know, what is the mission of the police department and the police service,” Lewis said, “and then how do we adequately fund and support that mission to scale?”

“And that has to be in the context of us defining other services and programs to deal with problems that historically we’ve had the police deal with, but that we now think fall outside of their mission.”

The city has shifted some emergency response away from SPD since 2020, moving civilian 911 dispatchers, the Office of Emergency Management and [parking enforcement](#) out from under the department and [expanding the city’s Health One nonemergency response team](#), operated by the Seattle Fire Department.

Though every council member and Harrell agree on the need for police alternatives, the city doesn’t have a cohesive vision of how to fund those alternatives.

Though the council never cut funding for a single police officer, the department has gone from 1,348 sworn personnel in 2020 to 1,137 in June 2022, as over 400 officers have either quit or retired, and SPD has struggled to hire at the same rate.

Police departments in other cities and [different departments within Seattle have struggled with similar attrition](#). However, Nelson and others say politics and morale related to the defund movement have contributed to the exodus of police.

In addition to partially lifting the provisos to provide hiring bonuses up to \$30,000 for SPD hires, Nelson says it’s important the city not further reduce the department’s budget, even as some duties are moved away from SPD.

“I do not believe that we should be taking money out of SPD to do that. I think we’re talking both and, not either/or,” Nelson said.

Many details of the city’s next steps toward police reform are tied up in ongoing police union negotiations and the new administration.

Harrell will present his first proposed budget later this week and is expected to release a white paper later this year on an undefined potential third public safety department that would work separate of fire and police. In a recent “term sheet” — a less binding memorandum of understanding between the council and Harrell — both parties agree to introduce a plan in October for some alternative response that will be operational in 2023.

Deputy Mayor Monisha Harrell declined to share details of the potential third department but said the administration’s 2023 budget will include funding for some components of the department, with the intent of it being operational in 2024.

Morales said that despite seemingly symbiotic relationships in City Hall, agreeing on how to implement reform is still an uphill battle.

“Everybody seems to be in agreement on [creating alternatives], but then when we actually try to do it, we get a lot of resistance,” Morales said. “So I’m a little bit confused about how we are going to help the police do actual police work better if we don’t actually fund ways to reassign the things that don’t require a gun in a badge.”

For activists, even if the city can align on alternative response, it will fall short of the demands made in 2020.

	“We were the only city in the country to see the total [police] budget drop two years in a row, and we hold on to that as a huge win,” Cházaro said. “... But we are going to have to hold the line to see the kind of public safety community members actually want.”
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HEADLINE	09/25 SPD ready embrace alternative responses?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/is-seattle-police-department-ready-to-embrace-alternative-responses-to-a-gun-and-a-badge/
GIST	<p>For the last two years, Seattle politicians and activists have debated whether and how to reform public safety response in the city, focusing on the funding and responsibilities of the Seattle Police Department.</p> <p>After shifting more than \$45 million in services out of SPD over the last two budget cycles, elected officials have set their sights on creating response alternatives, rather than deliberate divestments from the department once promised to activists.</p> <p>Members of the department, including incoming Chief Adrian Diaz, are somewhat cautiously open to turning some call response responsibilities over to other responders.</p> <p>Diaz, who has been serving as interim chief since 2020 and was selected last week by Mayor Bruce Harrell to hold the position permanently — if approved by the city council — has openly supported a “public safety approach” that includes increased civilian response, a maintained police budget and a “culture change” in the department.</p> <p>“Throughout my career, I’ve been 100% in favor of another public safety response, but I don’t want to call it alternative because like there’s so many components to it,” Diaz said, noting his involvement in growing SPD’s mental health response, Youth Violence Reduction Initiative and Before the Badge program.</p> <p>“It’s hard to say alternative response because there’s so many different definitions of alternatives,” Diaz said, noting that in many cases he prefers “co-responses,” to describe instances when a social worker, mental health care provider, someone working in housing or other civilian may respond to a call along with but not in lieu of SPD.</p> <p>The motives of those seeking increased alternatives range from wanting to provide more specialized services to those in need of mental or medical care, prevent the likelihood of escalation or, in some cases, lessen the workload of the police department, which has lost more than 400 officers since 2020. The types of alternatives being considered range from subsidizing police response with trained civilians to fully replacing officers on certain calls.</p> <p>The City Council and mayor’s office have yet to come to terms on what type of alternative responses might suit the city, but recently signed an agreement to present a plan by the end of the year. In the meantime, Diaz said SPD is working to better define which calls make sense for SPD and which could be handled by someone other than an officer.</p> <p>In 2021, a study by the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform looked at three years of dispatch data and determined that up to 49% of the calls received by SPD could have been handled by civilian responders.</p> <p>Diaz, however, says that the number is closer to 12%-15%. Yet he agrees that a badge and a gun are not necessary to handle many emergency calls that are directed to the department, which has traditionally been treated as a “catch all.”</p> <p>“I think every officer is going to tell you ‘yeah, there’s plenty of calls that I get, maybe not daily, but throughout the year, that are clearly not something for an officer to cover,’” Diaz said.</p> <p>Others, he says, may warrant another response.</p>

For example, Diaz says “person down” calls may be better served without police being the primary responders, because the person involved is more likely to need medical care than criminal intervention.

“We get there and we realize, OK, this is probably a medical issue. Somebody has maybe an alcohol problem and they’re passed out. Or maybe they’re on a drug overdose. The police officer shouldn’t have to respond to that because it’s a medical problem,” Diaz said, noting later that mental health calls are his top priority for providing better alternative or co-response.

“So do we send an officer to that call and take up a lot of their officer’s time,” Diaz asked, adding that there may be cases in which police need to help intervene, but shouldn’t necessarily be the first to respond.

But not all officers are as broadly supportive of alternative responses.

Mike Solan, president of the Seattle Police Officers Guild, who has been with SPD for over 20 years, said last week that he and most officers support some forms of civilian response, but have been “traumatized” by the city’s consideration of defunding the department and are hesitant to sign on to an undefined plan.

“If the politicians have a plan that creates an atmosphere where we learn more, and we get more training, and we can be a better service to the community, then I’m all for that,” Solan said. “But what I’m hearing more often than not, are just platitudes and there’s really no plan.”

Solan said talking about replacing police response without any plan in place is residual response to the protests surrounding the police killing of George Floyd in 2020, and uses officers as scapegoats for flawed public safety in the city.

“You cannot continue to malign the officers that serve and throw them under the bus more often than not,” Solan said, adding that discussions of police reform contribute to low morale and resignations in the department.

Diaz and the department are working on a “risk management demand” study, which will assess service calls to determine which level of response makes the most sense, according to SPD. In a forum he attended when vying for the permanent chief position, Diaz described those categories of response: officer response; primarily officer response with a civilian partner; primarily social service response with an officer support; and civilian response.

Certain calls, like about trash and other non emergency issues, would be answered by nonofficers, thus freeing up time for officers to focus on more serious criminal activity.

“That’s where I end up having to take in much more deeper analysis than what the union is probably understanding,” Diaz said.

Solan said he recognizes the value of unsworn staff in certain situations, voicing his support for a proposed expansion of the city’s park ranger program. But he said he worries about civilian response being ineffective in some instances.

One example Solan gave was civilians staffing traffic and large crowds outside of sporting events, where he says people become disorderly and won’t necessarily comply without the threat of arrest.

“I can tell you right now people will disregard somebody who has not arrestable powers ... it’ll be chaos,” Solan said.

Solan said removing police from certain calls to prevent potential escalation would be an overreaction to cases of overuse of force.

	<p>“Of course, that could be an issue. But does that mean you remove a police officer? No,” Solan said, advocating police presence as a means of protecting firefighters, social workers or other civilian responders.</p> <p>On Tuesday, Harrell will release his first proposed budget as mayor and Diaz will present the risk management report. Diaz would not share whether to expect any new funding in SPD’s budget for civilian response, but said that he supports a recent agreement between the City Council and mayor’s office to establish an overall plan for emergency response in the city, including creating some alternative response in 2023.</p> <p>Diaz said the department was “100% at the table” in helping Harrell form a potential third public safety department, the details of which will be shared by the end of the year, with the intent of operating the department in 2024.</p> <p>But many of the finer points of alternative response may not be able to be finalized until the city and SPOG agree on a contract for the officers, which has been in negotiations for nearly two years.</p> <p>“If that’s (alternative response) what’s going to be put in place [when] we’re done bargaining, obviously, we would support that. In the meantime, we’ve considered most of that our body of work, and so they have to negotiate that with us,” Solan said.</p> <p>“But I’m not quite certain that they even understand what alternative forms of policing looks like,” he added.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/23 Complicated: recycling batteries in WA
SOURCE	https://crosscut.com/environment/2022/09/complicated-process-recycling-batteries-washington-state
GIST	<p>At first glance, you might think Phil Currie is holding the world’s least appetizing bar of chocolate. But the damaged computer battery — glossy, dark and segmented into bulging squares within a large Ziploc — presents a much bigger health risk than a Hershey’s.</p> <p>“We can’t put these with other batteries because it might cause a fire,” said the environmental field site specialist, standing amid drums and boxes full of battery waste at the North Seattle Hazardous Waste Facility. The collection site on Stone Avenue North, sandwiched between Aurora Avenue North and Haller Lake and decorated with whimsical frog statues, is one of four sites in King County where county residents can regularly drop off hazardous waste, including batteries.</p> <p>More people are using batteries as battery-powered tools become bigger parts of our lives, from laptops to electric vehicles promising to release us from the grip of fossil fuels. But anything that holds a charge will ultimately need to be carefully disposed of. Rechargeable batteries like nickel, lithium-ion, and lead batteries can be recycled into silverware, pots and pans, stainless steel and even new batteries. Single-use alkaline and lithium batteries can also be recycled into steel, with the former ending up in products as varied as road asphalt and sunscreen.</p> <p>This creates more opportunities for people to dispose of batteries improperly, polluting the environment and putting waste processors’ health at risk.</p> <p>Many batteries can be recycled with the help of people like Currie and his colleague Diana Doyle. Recycling enables the reuse of metals and critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt and nickel that are in increasingly short supply and often inhumanely acquired.</p> <p>“I see people wanting to do the right thing, often,” Doyle said. “A lot of times they’ll bring, literally, bless their heart, one battery in... from five miles away.”</p>

But many people don't know how, or don't have the resources, to dispose of batteries correctly. People involved in King County recycling and hazardous waste management as well as environmental advocates worry that the existing county and state systems and voluntary manufacturer take-back efforts just can't keep up with demand in a safe way. Consumers need more help to dispose of their batteries safely, cheaply and equitably.

"We're making all these really amazing strides to help us and to improve our environment. And we're now realizing that those strides have some consequences, such as we really don't have a system set up to handle all these battery-containing products that we are now creating," said Tristen Gardner, who works on battery policy for the county.

A big boost in battery use — and potential harm

King County collects hazardous waste from at least 2.1 million residents and 60,000 businesses across 38 cities, unincorporated areas and two tribal nations, and has collected batteries for at least 15 years. In 2019, the Hazardous Waste Management Program collected 90,000 pounds of batteries from households and 4,000 pounds from businesses. Household batteries make up nearly 18% of King County's hazardous waste collection.

Gardner said about 200,000 pounds of batteries were properly disposed of in 2020. It's tough to say how many batteries are used in King County, which would give a better idea of proper disposal rates.

The county estimates 914,000 pounds of household single-use and rechargeable batteries were sent to Cedar Hills Regional Landfill in 2019 — about three times as much as in 2011, when 296,000 tons were sent there.

At the state level, the Department of Ecology reports that between 2016 and 2021, hazardous waste facilities working with households and small businesses collected 31% more batteries. "The amount of batteries in the waste stream is too small to detect any trends. But we know the use of batteries in consumer goods is growing exponentially," said Ecology's Dave Bennett.

That increase puts battery management "close to the top" of concerns for people thinking about recycling and product stewardship, said Adrian Tan, policy and market development manager for the King County Solid Waste Division. Based on what his colleagues see at landfills, people aren't disposing of batteries well.

A big reason for concern is that batteries can start fires at waste transfer stations, in landfills or even in the backs of trucks, putting employees at risk and requiring taxpayer funds to clean up, Tan said. As batteries jostle and get compacted, they can explode and ignite — especially those rechargeable batteries that aren't supposed to go in the trash or curbside recycling bins.

Ecology doesn't track fire incident data at transfer stations, trucks or waste facilities, but at least eight recent Washington fires were likely caused by batteries. An EPA study published in July 2021 mentions a few: In April 2018, a hoverboard battery in the back of a Bellevue-area garbage truck ignited in transit, prompting the driver to dump the whole load in the middle of the street. A 2018 lithium-ion-linked fire at Simon Metals in Tacoma led to around \$100,000 in damage and required seven firetrucks to manage. Just this month, a fire broke out at a Seattle-area transfer station that is still under investigation but was linked to batteries, Gardner said. For their part, the county has purchased FireRover infrared monitoring systems to identify battery fires in facilities.

Battery chemicals could also damage the environment. Landfills are concerned about the leakage of corrosive, toxic materials into waterways where salmon swim, for example.

Recycling batteries is complicated

To correctly dispose of a battery in King County, people have a few options — all requiring time, cost and effort. And the process is complex, because different batteries require different disposal methods.

Tan points to the Seattle-based waste collection company Ridwell. “We’re seeing programs like Ridwell, which is a private company, [serving people who] pay to get additional materials collected, and people are willing to do that. This, of course, isn’t accessible for everyone. It’s expensive... but I think it goes to show that people want to do the right thing... but we’re not able to provide the services to the level that the residents would like to see.”

Ridwell’s Caleb Weaver said a 6-year-old’s questions about how to recycle batteries were the initial spark that led to the launch of Ridwell. They have recycled hundreds of thousands of pounds of batteries since then. “Today, batteries remain one of the most frequently used categories in our service,” he said.

All batteries are recyclable to a degree, but not all municipalities have set up systems for battery recycling. King County accepts car batteries, button cell batteries, alkaline batteries, lithium batteries, lithium-ion batteries (a form of rechargeables), hearing-aid batteries and more at its four [permanent hazardous waste collection sites](#): North Seattle near Shoreline, Auburn, Factoria and South Seattle near South Park. A roving “wastemobile” spends a few days at a time in different locations throughout the county.

These facilities are all drive-up. Technicians meet you at your car and help you unload your materials while giving you additional tips on how to dispose of batteries if required. At least one of these sites is open every day from 9 to 5. Sorting batteries from fuel canisters, paint cans, fire extinguishers and more is no small task, and is done by hand. Doyle, Currie and their colleagues are adept at identifying them, dumping them onto rolling carts and sorting them like a toxic Halloween candy haul. Unlabeled batteries get handled with the most careful treatment.

“You’re just picking every little lithium battery out of there because we need to reserve it because we’re running out of lithium,” Doyle said. Damaged batteries are placed in special shipping containers; alkaline batteries are picked up by a hazardous waste company and taken to a local steel company for recycling.

If time or transit access make a drop-off difficult in Seattle, you can schedule [a special item pickup](#) through Seattle Public Utilities. But pickups must be coordinated through the utility account holder — creating another hurdle for many renters — and cost between \$5 and \$20 depending on how many batteries you have.

For people 65 or older, those with disabilities or those without a vehicle, the county offers a [home collection program](#). Pickups are scheduled, usually Wednesdays between 9 and 3, and the county advises that there may be backlogs.

Battery manufacturer advocates set up their own voluntary stewardship program, Call2Recycle, more than [two decades ago](#). More than 200 manufacturers pay for a program that makes rechargeable battery collection (and single-use, in some places) easier and less costly for consumers. Companies that sell battery-containing products have volunteered to offer no-cost battery take-backs at their physical locations. Call2Recycle lists [about three dozen locations in the King County area](#) — mostly hardware stores like Home Depot and Lowe’s — that accept rechargeables, single-use batteries, cellphones and, newly, e-bike batteries.

Gregg’s Cycles Greenlake store manager Leif Thorsen said the company joined Call2Recycle after many e-bike manufacturers whose products it sells joined the program. They’re not seeing many batteries returned to the store yet, but want people to know the option is there. “Honestly, it feels like it’s kind of in the early stages. ... [we’re] talking to consumers that are buying them now and letting them know that there’s a place [for their batteries] down the road,” he said.

Companies that have take-back programs might not have them in accessible places. When Heather Trim with Zero Waste Washington went to a hardware store to find one, she had to ask an associate where the take-back box was. “It was hidden way behind a desk. ... It was definitely not obvious,” she says.

King County has been contracting with Call2Recycle since 2003 to recycle rechargeable batteries collected and sorted at hazardous waste sites. The company has even been piloting a program with for-

profit Ridwell for at-home battery collection, to see if it increases Call2Recycle collection rates. Ridwell picks up alkaline, rechargeable, and even hearing aid batteries as part of its paid-for service every two weeks, from \$12 per month.

In the past five years, Call2Recycle has collected almost 580,000 pounds of batteries from King County and 1.18 million pounds in Washington overall, shuttling used batteries to sorting facilities and processors around the country. “Out of all of those, there’s nothing that ends up in landfills,” says Linda Gabor of Call2Recycle. “Everything that we can recover gets recovered. And 100% of those batteries are recycled that come in.”

Because manufacturers take on much of the recycling costs, consumers often end up paying higher prices. Thorsen says that e-bikes include a \$15 environmental recovery fee.

Batteries put in trash or recycling bins wind up at Cedar Hills. King County contracts with specialized waste management companies that attempt to reuse or recycle them.

Gabor says that consumers who live in places without single-use battery recycling options can pay Call2Recycle for collection boxes that get picked up.

What can we do?

Snowballing battery usage has charged up the county and other government collaboratives like the Northwest Product Stewardship Council (co-chaired by Tan) to work with legislators on bills establishing a statewide battery stewardship program that makes battery manufacturers responsible for safe disposal.

“It would be fantastic if you could make it easier,” said Diane Jackson, a Ballard resident who recently dropped off batteries at the North Seattle hazardous waste collection site. “I think more people would use it. I can imagine how many go in the garbage.”

Gardner says collection and battery use are an environmental justice issue. “Right now for people who have the privilege and ability to get Teslas, to get lithium-ion batteries, to be able to turn all of [their] gasoline tools to batteries... We’re the ones putting pressure on our local systems. And it’s not fair for everyone else,” Gardner says.

According to a 2012 survey of nearly 2,000 King County residents, hazardous waste collection sites are visited disproportionately by people who live in single-family homes, own their homes, identify as white, and earn higher incomes except for above \$150,000.

Dave Bennett with the Department of Ecology says a good battery stewardship program would help residents and governments by standardizing battery recycling, and improving equitable access to battery collecting and recycling services that are safe and free to consumers. They would ideally accept all battery types so consumers don’t need to wonder if they’re putting the right one in the right place. The program would be paid for by battery manufacturers. And the government would design a system that completely separates battery recycling from other solid waste disposal, hopefully preventing fires and environmental impact from leaking batteries.

“We’d also have much more transparency about how much is actually reused and recycled,” Tan said.

States like Vermont and the District of Columbia have established battery stewardship programs, and California passed a bill creating a program just this month. Washington state representatives have introduced battery stewardship legislation at least three times since 2013, but none have passed. There’s precedent for a program like this in Washington, which has product stewardship programs for products like paint and e-waste like TVs and computers.

Battery stewardship proponents are pushing for an all-battery solution: All batteries would require the same consumer action at the end of their useful lives, reducing confusion.

	<p>“To the average person, a battery is a battery is a battery. So if you put a double-A alkaline next to a double-A lithium-ion, it’s very, very hard for anybody who’s not trained to differentiate ... between the chemistries, and so the easier that I think you can make it, the better the recycling rates are,”</p> <p>Call2Recycle’s Gabor said.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/25 Seniors home health care services in peril
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2022/09/25/seniors-home-health-care/
GIST	<p>RICHFIELD, Minn. — Racked with nausea and unable to leave the bathroom, Acey Hofflander muttered in confusion. Her husband tried to press a damp washcloth against her neck, his hands trembling and weak from Parkinson’s disease.</p> <p>“What’s happening? What’s going on?” Acey mumbled.</p> <p>Their roles had unexpectedly reversed. At 85, Acey is the healthy one, the organized, energetic caregiver for husband, Tom, 88. But when a grueling day of showering, dressing, feeding and transporting him to medical appointments pushed Acey beyond exhaustion in July, she wound up in the emergency room — a health crisis the Hofflanders blame in large part on a lack of professional, in-home care.</p> <p>Amid a national shortage of home-care workers that deepened during the covid-19 pandemic, the couple spent much of this year on a private agency list waiting to be assigned a professional home-care aide. But over four months, from April to August, no aides were available, leaving Acey to carry the load on her own. Many nights — after an hour-long bedtime routine that included giving Tom his pills and pulling on his Depends before tucking him into his recliner — she lay sleepless in bed.</p> <p>“He needs a lot of care, and it’s wearing, not only physically but mentally,” Acey said in one of several interviews. “It makes you worried about what’s going to happen. How long can I do this?”</p> <p>The Hofflanders’ story is becoming increasingly common as the country’s shortage of home-care workers worsens, jeopardizing the independence of a generation of elderly Americans who had banked on aging in place rather than spending their twilight years in nursing homes.</p> <p>Polls say an overwhelming majority of people older than 50 want to remain in their homes as long as possible, and studies have shown aging in place can promote quality of life and self-esteem. But Acey Hofflander’s health scare — she stayed in the hospital overnight with a form of migraine — reveal the dangers when elderly people are forced to go it alone.</p> <p>The shortage predates the pandemic but has been exacerbated by it, according to industry and government experts. Demand for home services spiked as lockdowns, uncontrolled infections and deaths frightened people away from nursing homes, where the number of residents declined nationally from about 1.3 million in 2019 to 1.1 million in 2021 and has only partially rebounded in 2022. At the same time, because of the tight labor market, the low-paid workers have quit for less taxing jobs in Amazon warehouses and as Uber drivers.</p> <p>The lack of services also is affecting disabled people under 65 years old who are dependent on others for daily needs.</p> <p>The result is that an increasing share of elderly and disabled people are living at home but having difficulty finding the help they need to do it safely. A fall or an exhausted caregiver could mean they are forced into a nursing home or a bedroom in their adult child’s home.</p> <p>“The crisis is real and won’t be quickly fixed. The shortage of health care workers is like nothing we’ve seen before,” said Ruth Martynowicz, chief operating officer for Michigan-based Trinity Health At Home, part of a large Catholic health system. Trinity Health At Home said recently it was turning away 250</p>

home-care requests per week across its 11-state network, which is mostly in the Northeast and Upper Midwest.

The shortage of workers is threatening the option of aging at home for people up and down the economic scale — whether they qualify for government Medicaid, have medical conditions that qualify for Medicare coverage, or must pay out of pocket.

“I often worry about where families are turning right now,” said Vicki Hoak, chief executive officer of the Home Care Association of America, which represents 4,000 home care agencies across the country.

Many of its members had been turning away 30 to 40 requests for care per month, she said: “We have that increased need, yet we are having to turn away people because we don’t have staff.”

In Minnesota, where the Hofflanders live, the state’s long-term care industry has been hit especially hard. The state economic agency estimated [at the end of 2021 that there were at least 7,200 vacant home-care jobs in the state](#), and state industry leaders said the number likely is closer to 9,000.

Workers at the lower rungs of the home-care industry — mostly women and people of color — are among the lowest paid in the United States. The median pay for personal care aides was just \$14.27 an hour in 2021, according to PHI, a nonprofit that publishes [annual reports](#) on the national home-care workforce.

Workers can earn equal or higher wages at Home Depot or McDonald’s — performing jobs that are a lot easier than bathing, dressing and feeding seniors.

“Fast food is trying to find workers and retail is trying to find workers and they are all trying to pull from the same labor pool,” said Kezia Scales, senior director of policy research at PHI.

Industry representatives said there are no quick fixes. National trade associations and individual state groups are lobbying to [block spending cuts](#) for home care under Medicare while advocating for higher compensation so workers can be paid higher wages. Industry leaders also are examining ways to make home care work a rung in a health-care career ladder. They say extra pay could be allocated for people who receive training for dementia. Because up to a third of home-care workers were born outside the United States, industry groups have urged Congress to consider special [temporary visas](#).

In the meantime, the worker shortage is having a widespread effect.

Large home-care chains, small companies and local nonprofits are all struggling to find staff, agency representatives said in interviews. Even after recruits survive background checks and are trained, they sometimes quit after two weeks, said Cher Kuechle, who runs a Home Instead franchise in Edina, Minn. “This is a very thankless job and people don’t really need to do it. There are other options to make money,” said Osagie Edison, assistant living director of Anchor House, a small home-care agency in Crystal, outside Minneapolis.

Edison said he was trying to hire six additional home care aides over the summer. But potential applicants know they can make better wages driving for Uber or UPS, he said. Every week he gets calls from “desperate” family members and case managers who have been waiting as long as six months for a caregiver. He is forced to tell them he does not have enough staff.

“Sometimes I don’t even respond,” Edison said. “They know what’s going on.”

PHI estimates that the home-care workforce nationally numbers around 2.6 million. About 1 million more home-care workers will be needed by 2030 as the baby-boom generation finishes aging into retirement — what demographers call the “Silver Tsunami.”

Policymakers have long recognized that America’s patchwork system of home care is insufficient, a source of anxiety for families across the nation.

More than 90 percent of the estimated 5 million who received care from home health agencies in the United States in 2018 required help with bathing, dressing, using the toilet, walking and getting in and out of bed, according to the Centers for Disease Control's National Center for Health Statistics. More than two-thirds needed help eating.

The Biden administration in 2021 sought \$400 billion in new spending for home- and community-based care, channeled through Medicaid, to states. Access to care would have been expanded and workers would have received raises and benefits. The Democratic-controlled House pared that to \$150 million. But the plan collapsed when Democrats failed to muster enough Senate votes for the ambitious Build Back Better legislation.

Disabled people under 65, some of whom have lived their entire lives dependent on others for daily care, also are encountering a lack of in-home help, advocates said.

After the pandemic hit, Minneapolis resident Antonietta Giovanni lost the home-care aide who had cared during the day for her son, who is 29 and has autism. Loss of the paid help meant Giovanni could no longer do her outside work as a disability advocate and interpreter. But even after vaccines and testing became widely available, she was not able to find a replacement caregiver. The state pays her to be her son's aide for 40 hours per week, although she said she takes care of him many more hours than that.

"It has been two years of a very challenging journey, very overwhelming," she said. She secured the help of a new aide earlier this year, but that aide left after four months to seek a job in a group home for the disabled, where the pay is better.

"I shouldn't be mad at them, because it's not their fault," she said. "People have to do the best for their families."

A disabled Minnesotan, Lee Ohnesorge, 57, who was paralyzed in a motorcycle accident in 1993, needs help with basic needs for several hours in the morning and several hours in the evening, including what he calls his "bowel and bladder routines." He was admitted to a nursing home earlier in the pandemic because he had developed bedsores.

After seven months, he was healed and ready to return to his apartment. But it took him another two months to find a home-care aide — so he was stuck in the nursing home, waiting and calling around.

Eventually he found someone and moved home. But the aide was unreliable — showing up only late at night, for instance — and he had to begin his search again, Ohnesorge said. He said he recently called 30 agencies; seven had their phones disconnected, seven said they could not even place him on a waiting list, and the rest had limited availability and wait lists.

Many elderly and disabled people are relying on volunteers, neighbors, church networks — anyone who can help them skirt the next health crisis that might push them into a facility.

The Hofflanders have more community support than some other seniors. They get frequent visits from family and friends. The home is planted just outside the Minneapolis city limits on a block of suburban ranch homes, what they call "ramblers" in Minnesota.

Both Tom and Acey were widowed when they met in their 60s. Friends from church fixed them up, and they got married in 1999. Tom Hofflander worked in public schools as a physical education teacher and administrator and played golf. Acey worked as a secretary for years and raised her children and played tennis. In 2005, the local newspaper profiled their feat of walking all of Richfield's streets, nearly 125 miles.

Even after Tom's Parkinson's limited his mobility, Acey kept up a steady social schedule, organizing card games with friends. She keeps stacks of folders with all of his health records. They have a long-term care

insurance policy that they expect to pay for in-home care visits, but in a provision that is typical of such policies, coverage only begins once they have paid out of their own pocket for 90 days.

They both wanted to stay together in their house as long as possible, although they began researching assisted-living facilities, cognizant that Parkinson's would likely require that Tom have more hands-on care as the disease progressed.

"We want to be together, we want to live together," she said. "If he goes into assisted living, I would go into assisted living with him."

Last year, family members suggested they start with help in their home. So they went on a waiting list and continued to cope.

Managing around the house, with its wall-to-wall carpet and family photographs lined up in the living room, is not easy for just the two of them.

"I've got to get rebandaged!" Tom suddenly called out from his living room chair during an interview. A swatch of gauze flopped off his left shin.

"Oh no, not again," Acey said, hopping up and sticking it back on. Tom's skin got scraped off when Acey lifted the dishwasher door to close it without noticing how close Tom was standing. Now she had to keep the cut clean and covered, one of the dozens of details she manages every day.

She described how she learned to get Tom showered and dressed. He sits on a bench in the shower. "Mainly the biggest problem with someone taking a shower is their back and the seat and back of the legs. He turns his back to me," she said. "My arms get wet, and my feet."

One of her tricks is to button his dress shirts before she puts them on, and then pull them over his head. She slides his trousers over his legs, she said, then gets him to stand and pulls them the rest of the way up. Socks are one of the hardest things to get on. Acey describes all this grueling work in a cheerful, can-do voice.

"She never complains. She just does it all," said Acey's daughter, Shari Lyrek, 61, who stops by the house several times a week to help out.

Acey carries small armfuls of clothes to the basement multiple times a day, to avoid hauling a single large basket that might pull her off balance. Tom goes up the stairs to the bedroom on a lift. In January, Tom experienced a spate of falls. Using her training from occupational therapy, she helped him get up herself, rushing a chair into place for him to haul himself up, and using her own weight in the chair to give it stability.

"When she's supposed to be laying low, or backing off, or reducing stress, she keeps going," Tom said.

The day in late July that she got too sick to leave the bathroom, Acey had overdone it.

She showered and dressed Tom in the morning, wrestling his 180-pound frame into clothes. She packed him and his walker in the car for trips to a doctor and a physical therapy appointment, with a stop for pizza in between. She shopped for groceries and picked up prescriptions as Tom sat in the parking lot, listening to the radio.

By evening, Acey texted her daughter that all was well; they had arrived home safely. Then she was struck by vomiting and diarrhea; she grew disoriented.

Summoned by Tom, Lyrek drove to their house and called an ambulance as soon as she saw her. One of Tom's sons came to the house to stay with him.

	<p>Doctors determined she did not have a stroke, Acey said, but she had transient global amnesia brought on by a “silent” or acephalgic migraine. Basically, she said, she pushed herself too hard. She has no recollection of her ambulance ride and CT scan.</p> <p>“The whole issue is stress,” Acey said.</p> <p>The episode prompted Acey to ask another home-care agency if it had an aide available. By a stroke of luck, they did. With help three days per week, Acey now has more time to pack for a move from their house to an over-55 apartment complex in October, closer to her daughter. It’s an apartment with a single level; no more stairs. When they need it, assisted living is a possible next step, in a separate wing in that complex or at another facility.</p> <p>The new complex is a half-hour away, outside the service area of the current home-care agency, however. The Hofflanders will have to hunt for a new caregiver.</p> <p>“Are we going to have to wait another four months?” Acey said.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/24 Battlefield hotlines keep US weapons firing
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/battlefield-hotlines-let-u-s-military-keep-ukraines-weapons-firing-11664009094
GIST	<p>ON A MILITARY BASE, Poland—Near where weapons and equipment donated by the U.S. and other allies cross the border into Ukraine, a group of 55 U.S. troops and translators on iPads fielded repair queries about weapons that are already on the battlefield, via secure chat apps.</p> <p>There are 14 chats for each major weapon system, forming a makeshift wartime telemaintenance network for fighters who are using weapons well beyond the limits for which they were designed.</p> <p>Photos of barrels worn down by repeated firings arrived over chat from Ukrainians asking how to make the ordnance more accurate even with rifling stripped away. Front-line soldiers sent videos asking how to salvage weapons that otherwise would be considered irreparable and what fixes were needed to keep them working.</p> <p>Ukrainian forces also sent sketches showing how they reverse-engineered a part that would take too long to arrive from an allied partner, and asked if it would work even if the created part wasn’t perfect.</p> <p>“What this is doing is quickly returning equipment to the battlefield,” said a lieutenant colonel in charge of the chats.</p> <p>Reporters weren’t allowed to use the names of troops leading the telemaintenance networks. Reporters who also met the troops agreed to not identify the type of app used for the chats, or where in Poland U.S. troops supporting the chats are based.</p> <p>After seven months of war, U.S. and allied Western nations providing arms and other support to Ukraine and its soldiers have discovered that it isn’t enough to give Kyiv weapons. They also need to provide spare parts and access to experts who can help Ukrainians repair equipment or fabricate parts near the front lines.</p> <p>“This war requires quick and nonstandard solutions,” Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksii Reznikov said about the round-the-clock online technical consultations. “It gives a perfect opportunity to ensure permanent maintenance and combat-ready state of armaments and military equipment.”</p> <p>Mr. Reznikov said that Ukraine has begun carrying out some complex repairs of Western-style armaments in Ukraine and mastered the production of around 10% of needed spare parts, sometimes even without technical documentation.</p>

“Speed and quality are the defining criteria in this case,” Mr. Reznikov said.

While allies donated weapons, they didn’t provide the manuals that come with them, in part to protect proprietary information. Instead, parts of manuals arrive in the form of chat messages.

When the war began, Ukrainian repair and maintenance specialists received accelerated training from Western allies and are now passing on that knowledge to their colleagues, Mr. Reznikov added.

U.S. troops supporting the chats said it is unclear whether the chats are enough to keep all the weapons operable, or whether contractors or other support personnel will eventually have to enter Ukraine. Proponents of using government-funded contractors argue that the weapons supplied would last even longer if experts could repair them from Ukraine.

The chats began unofficially after the first nine Ukrainian troops who were trained to keep the weapons running returned to Ukraine and started contacting their teachers for advice via text messages. By June, the U.S. military codified the chats, arranging for troops from Army Materiel Command, which is responsible for the U.S. Army’s equipment, and Ukrainian translators to talk to Ukrainian fighters from inside a building near where the donated weapons entered Ukraine.

As of earlier this month, the U.S. said all 16 [Himars—the mobile rocket](#) systems that Ukrainians have said were key in their reclaiming of territory—remain operational. One reason, soldiers here said, is that through the chats they have saved damaged Himars that otherwise would have come off the battlefield.

A Ukrainian Himars operator said the ability to communicate in real time with American trainers had proven extremely helpful for quick troubleshooting in the field.

During a recent firing mission, the advanced weapon system’s computer displayed an error message that the Ukrainian didn’t know how to resolve. The army lieutenant initiated a video chat with a U.S. instructor, who then used Google Translate to send back instructions in Ukrainian.

“Ukrainians are going to identify a need, the experts are going to diagnose a fault or what’s needed and either walk them through it or put parts on order,” the U.S. lieutenant colonel said. “And then we use the American supply system to get that part here to transfer right down.”

The use of both secure and widely available apps has become increasingly common between local forces and the U.S. troops supporting them. In Afghanistan, for example, U.S. troops and Afghans often communicated over WhatsApp, at times using their phones to ask for U.S. air support on ongoing missions.

U.S. officials have said they don’t always know where the weapons and equipment they donate end up in Ukraine. The chats have become one way to find out, U.S. troops in charge of the chats said.

Army Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, visited the support facility earlier this month, in part to meet the troops who created the chats.

“Our ability to innovate, adapt and integrate technology through telemaintenance to meet the current demand in this environment has been extremely successful,” Army Col. Dave Butler, a spokesman for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said.

The chats also have taught the U.S. military about how much wear a weapon can take. Barrels that usually take U.S. troops years to wear down have taken weeks in Ukraine, because fighters are firing rounds so frequently. That information is going back to defense weapons manufacturers, in some cases to determine which parts need to be made fastest, U.S. military officials said.

Often, requested parts are basic. Early on, Ukrainians most frequently asked for spare tires. Now, fuel and oil filters are in high demand.

	<p>Of the 14 chats, those supporting Himars and howitzers are considered priorities, the lieutenant colonel said. Soldiers here said every request—there have been roughly 650 so far—has been answered within minutes. Spare parts usually have left the nearby airfield within days.</p> <p>But even that isn't fast enough, and the supply of many parts can't meet the demand. In response, Ukrainians have created their own production systems.</p> <p>The U.S. lieutenant colonel said Ukraine's support network includes welding, machining and fabrication that tops U.S. abilities in Poland.</p> <p>The maintenance app and chat numbers were first shared through word-of-mouth and then through newly-trained personnel who had headed back to Ukraine. Now, Ukrainian commanders have the chat numbers so they can get them to their fighters, the lieutenant colonel said.</p> <p>The need to help Ukrainians salvage what has already been donated is likely to increase, as allied members say they are running out of stockpiles to donate. Some worry that fatigue could lead to fewer donations, particularly during winter, when limits on Russian oil and gas could lead to fuel shortages across Europe.</p> <p>U.S. commanders said they are no longer planning only how to ship weapons but also how to create a network to deliver parts so the big guns can keep shooting.</p> <p>"War is a test of logistics," said retired Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, a former commander of the U.S. Army in Europe.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/25 Black farmers aid skeptical; biased lending
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/black-farmers-skeptical-about-aid-after-biased-lending-11664107382?mod=hp_lead_pos7
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—Last month, President Biden signed into law a spending bill intended to reckon with what courts and government investigations have repeatedly found to be a history of discrimination by the U.S. Agriculture Department against Black farmers.</p> <p>But for many Black farmers and their advocates, they will have to see the money to believe it.</p> <p>While they welcome the new federal aid, included in the health, climate and tax package that Congress passed with only Democratic votes, decades of failed efforts to address the issue have left them skeptical.</p> <p>"I just feel like nothing's going to happen," said Carolyn Jones, who with her husband, Chris, raises livestock in Monroe and Chickasaw counties in Mississippi. "We've gotten excited before."</p> <p>The congressional funding provisions, championed by Sens. Cory Booker (D., N.J.) and Raphael Warnock (D., Ga.), provides the USDA with \$3.1 billion for loan modifications to farmers in financial distress and \$2.2 billion for farmers who have experienced discrimination through the department's farm-lending programs.</p> <p>The latest package follows a court-ordered halt to a more narrowly targeted \$4 billion fund for minority farmers that had been in the March 2021 Covid relief bill. White farmers, including Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller filing as a private citizen, had sued over that funding, saying it was unconstitutional to exclude them on the basis of race.</p> <p>The new funding is structured differently: A farmer of any race who is in financial distress and has a direct or guaranteed loan with the USDA is eligible for relief, including loan modifications, under the \$3.1 billion. Meanwhile, the \$2.2 billion pot of money is available to anyone who has experienced</p>

discrimination through USDA lending programs before Jan. 1, 2021, which could also include white women.

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack told reporters last month that the agency was thinking carefully about how to structure the discrimination funding, which Congress stipulated has to be administered by an outside group. He said the agency is also reviewing its loan portfolio to figure out how to make sure financially distressed farmers don't lose their land after a moratorium on foreclosures ends when the public-health emergency for the Covid-19 pandemic is lifted.

Some advocates believe the USDA could have successfully delivered more debt relief to Black farmers in 2021—before the lawsuit halted the program—if it had moved more quickly, and they are nervous that the agency is repeating that mistake.

“There was more than enough time to implement that, had the secretary given it high priority,” said Lloyd Wright, the former director of civil rights at the USDA. “Blacks have a long history of being promised things and not getting it.”

A USDA spokesperson said the agency had tried to deliver that funding as quickly as possible, noting that it was a new program, which typically takes more time to design and implement.

In a letter released this past Monday, Messrs. Booker, Warnock and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D., N.Y.) urged the USDA to swiftly take the next steps to “provide much needed financial assistance to Black farmers and others who have suffered discrimination through USDA’s farm lending programs.”

Rep. Glenn Thompson of Pennsylvania, the top Republican on the House Agriculture Committee, asked Mr. Vilsack in a letter last month how the agency would determine who was eligible for the programs, noting he was “deeply concerned with the lack of transparency throughout this entire process.”

Delays in loan funding have been part of the problem. Mr. and Mrs. Jones struggled in the 1970s to access the USDA funding they needed to expand as pig farmers. The loan they landed was half of what Mr. Jones had requested, and the USDA directed them to go through their local bank. But the USDA funds arrived late, their bank loan accrued interest and this ultimately set them up for foreclosure and bankruptcy, the family said.

Later, after decades of working other jobs, Mrs. Jones secured a USDA loan for their new farm raising beef cattle, which remains in operation. Mrs. Jones, who helped start the Mississippi Minority Farmers Alliance in 2012, said she wonders “where we could have been” had the family not been trapped by debt early on.

In recent years, the agency has emphasized its efforts to help launch a new, younger and more diverse generation of farmers.

But even as outright racism has faded, Black farmers said they still are often told their business models are wrong and that they have insufficient farming experience.

When USDA loan officers visited the urban farm at the Tupelo, Miss., home of Bryant Stubbs and Stephanie Green-Stubbs in August 2021, “the first thing they said is ‘we don’t buy trucks’” with these loans, said Ms. Green-Stubbs, who was seeking a loan for operating expenses. “What do you mean by that? Just because I’m Black, is that why you’re saying it?”

Ms. Green-Stubbs said she had done at least 12 interviews with USDA loan officers and is still trying to secure a loan.

A USDA spokesperson said the agency is “committed to facing its history, learning from mistakes, and doing the intentional work of building trust in the communities that need us most.”

The tense relationship between Black farmers and the Agriculture Department, founded by Abraham Lincoln in 1862, goes back generations. One source of tension is a system set up by Congress in 1937 of county committees of local farmers, long overwhelmingly white, with significant discretion to decide who was eligible for federal USDA loans. As late as 1996, only 37 county commissioners were Black, out of more than 8,000 commissioners nationwide, according to a report from the USDA's Civil Rights Action Team.

Repeatedly, government reports found that Black farmers were denied loans, or received smaller loans than white farmers, under this system. Black farmers also had limited avenues to protest the disparities. In 1983, the Reagan administration closed the USDA's Office of Civil Rights, creating a backlog of unaddressed complaints.

"These events were the culmination of a string of broken promises that had been made to African American farmers for well over a century," U.S. District Judge Paul Friedman, in Washington, D.C., wrote in 1999, approving a consent decree and settlement in the first Pigford class-action lawsuit brought by Black farmers against the USDA. Questions arose over the high numbers of farmers who applied late for the typically \$50,000 payments, and a second settlement was reached in 2010.

Critics of the government's response questioned the 31% of claims that were denied in the first Pigford lawsuit, although some media reports found alleged fraud in some payments.

"The farmers have been fighting for debt cancellation since the disastrous implementation of the Pigford lawsuit," said Tracy McCurdy, executive director of the Black Belt Justice Center, a legal and advocacy group for Black farmers.

The hurdles in financing have contributed to a steep drop in the number of Black farmers in the U.S., down from a peak of almost 926,000 in 1920 to roughly 18,450 Black farm operators in 1997, a 98% drop, according to USDA data. In that same period, the number of white farm operators fell from almost 5.5 million to under 1.9 million, a 66% drop.

As of 2017, there were 48,697 Black farmers, out of almost 3.4 million total farmers, according to the Census of Agriculture, although methods of counting have changed over time.

Some Black farmers simply stopped trying to work with the USDA after years of being denied loans, or receiving them delayed, forcing them to buy supplies at higher prices or plant their crops late.

Freddie Bynum, a cattle farmer with plots in Chickasaw and Pontotoc counties in Mississippi, said he had a \$35,000 loan rescinded in 2014 when he bought a tractor on the advice of his local loan officer, who said the purchase would be reimbursed through his already-approved loan. When the tractor purchase went through, he was told, "if you're able to get the money for the tractor, you don't need the loan."

In August, Mr. Bynum filed a discrimination lawsuit reflecting years of struggles with the local USDA office.

His inability to purchase enough land for his cattle to graze has meant he has to buy six rolls of hay each week, at \$40 a roll, to feed them, eating into his profits, he said. "I've never been able to get established like I want to."

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HEADLINE	09/24 China, India: negotiate end to war
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/24/russias-allies-china-and-india-call-for-negotiations-to-end-ukraine-war
GIST	China and India have called for a negotiated end to the Ukraine war, stopping short of robust support for traditional ally Russia.

After a week of pressure at the United Nations general assembly, Russia's foreign minister took the general assembly rostrum to deliver a fiery rebuke to western nations for what he termed a "grotesque" campaign against Russians.

But no major nation has rallied behind Russia, including China, which just days before the February invasion of Ukraine had vowed an "unbreakable" bond with President Vladimir Putin.

China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, called on Russia and Ukraine to "keep the crisis from spilling over" and from affecting developing countries.

"China supports all efforts conducive to the peaceful resolution of the Ukraine crisis. The pressing priority is to facilitate talks for peace," Wang said on Saturday.

"The fundamental solution is to address the legitimate security concerns of all parties and build a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture."

During his visit to the United Nations, Wang met Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, in their first talks since the war began.

Earlier this month Putin acknowledged Chinese "concerns" about Ukraine during a meeting with his counterpart, Xi Jinping.

US officials have been heartened by what they see as China's lack of concrete backing for the war and said that Beijing has declined requests to send military equipment, forcing Russia to rely on North Korea and Iran as its own supplies dwindle.

China's reaction to Russia is being closely watched for clues on its approach to Taiwan, a self-governing democracy that Beijing claims as its territory.

Wang held firm that China would take "forceful steps" against any interference, insisting that efforts to prevent "reunification" with Taiwan would be "crushed by the wheels of history".

India, unlike China, has a warm relationship with the United States but it has historical ties with Russia, its traditional defence supplier.

"As the Ukraine conflict continues to rage, we are often asked whose side we are on," said India's foreign minister, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar.

"Our answer, each time, is straight and honest – India is on the side of peace and will remain firmly there," he said.

"We are on the side that calls for dialogue and diplomacy as the only way out."

Russia's foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, at a news conference declined to answer whether there has been any pressure from China. In his speech, he sought to cast blame squarely on the west.

"The official Russophobia in the west is unprecedented. Now the scope is grotesque," Lavrov told the general assembly.

"They are not shying away from declaring the intent to inflict not only military defeat on our country but also to destroy and fracture Russia."

The United States, he said, since the end of the cold war has acted as if it is "an envoy of God on Earth, with the sacred right to act with impunity wherever and whenever they want", Lavrov said.

	<p>He also blasted the European Union as an “authoritarian, harsh, dictatorial entity” and said the bloc’s leadership forced one member state’s leader – the Cypriot president, Nicos Anastasiades – to cancel a planned meeting with him.</p> <p>Lavrov criticised the west for not engaging with Russia, saying, “we have never stepped away from maintaining contact”.</p> <p>Western powers are looking at further sanctions after Putin called up reservists and made a veiled threat to use nuclear weapons, and have refused to recognise results of referendums on Russian annexation being held in occupied territories.</p> <p>They have welcomed Lavrov’s isolation, noting how he only showed up at a security council session on Thursday to deliver remarks and not to listen to others.</p> <p>Russia enjoyed one rare voice of support on Saturday at the general assembly. Mali’s interim prime minister, Col Abdoulaye Maïga, appointed by coup leaders, hailed the “exemplary and fruitful cooperation” with Moscow.</p> <p>The junta has welcomed Russia’s Wagner Group security firm, despite western allegations of rights abuses, as France pulled out troops who had been struggling to contain a jihadist insurgency.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/25 Day 214 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/25/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-214-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 730 people were detained across Russia at the latest protests against the country’s mobilisation decree, a rights group said, three days after president Vladimir Putin ordered the country’s first military draft since the second world war. The independent OVD-Info protest monitoring group said it was aware of detentions in 32 cities, from St Petersburg to Siberia. Unsanctioned rallies are illegal under Russian law, which also forbids any activity considered to defame the armed forces. • A new law signed by Putin says Russian troops who refuse to fight, desert, disobey or surrender to the enemy could now face a jail sentence of up to 10 years, according to Russian media reports. The law was approved by the parliament during the week. • Russia’s deputy defence minister, Dmitry Bulgakov, has been dismissed from his post. Bulgakov, who has been in charge of military logistics since the beginning of the Ukraine invasion, has been replaced by Col Gen Mikhail Mizintsev, the head of the National Defence Management Centre, who oversaw Russia’s siege of Mariupol. • Russia’s foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, addressed the UN general assembly on Saturday, casting opposition to Russia’s assault on its neighbour as limited to Washington and countries under its sway. “The official Russophobia in the west is unprecedented. Now the scope is grotesque,” Lavrov told the general assembly. He criticised the west for not engaging with Russia, saying: “We have never stepped away from maintaining contact.” • Lavrov, in a news conference following his speech to the assembly in New York, said the Ukrainian regions where votes were under way would be under Moscow’s “full protection” if they were annexed by Russia, including with nuclear weapons. • The so-called referendums are under way in in Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia provinces, areas of Ukraine occupied by Russian troops, with residents told to vote on proposals to declare independence and then join Russia. The polls are due to run until Tuesday. • China’s foreign minister says it supports all efforts conducive to the peaceful resolution of the “crisis” in Ukraine. Wang Yi told the United Nations general assembly on Saturday that the pressing priority was to facilitate talks for peace, Reuters reported. • Iran regrets Ukraine’s decision to downgrade diplomatic ties, its foreign ministry says. A statement said Iran’s ministry spokesperson, Nasser Kanaani, had “advised” Ukraine to “refrain from being influenced by third parties who seek to destroy relations between the two countries”. It

	<p>came after Ukraine stripped Iran's ambassador of his accreditation over what it called Tehran's "unfriendly" decision to supply Russian forces with drones.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The queue at the border between Russia and Georgia is about 10km (six miles) long, where people have reportedly been waiting more than 20 hours to cross. The number of border crossings from Russia into Finland has doubled in recent days compared with last week. • Kyiv and Moscow traded blame for shelling in Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region on Saturday. Regional governor Oleksandr Starukh said on Telegram that Russian forces launched "a massive missile strike" on the region from about 10 planes, wounding at least three people. Russia's RIA state news agency, citing unnamed sources, said Ukrainian forces shelled a granary and fertiliser warehouses in the region. Reuters was unable to verify either side's claims. • Two civilians were killed in attacks in Ukraine's Donetsk region on Friday and three were injured, according to Pavlo Kyrylenko, governor of the Donetsk oblast. Russian forces also shelled settlements near the Russian border. In the Kupyan district, five people were injured from shelling, including two children, aged 10 and 17. • Russian authorities in the occupied regions of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson have allegedly started handing out draft notices and mobilising men of conscription age who "renounced Ukrainian citizenship and received passports of the Russian federation", according to Ukraine's ministry of defence. • President Volodymyr Zelenskiy told Ukrainians in occupied territory to hide from Russian mobilisation, avoid conscription letters and get to Ukraine-held territory. However, if they ended up in the Russian military, Zelenskiy asked people to save their lives and help liberate Ukraine. • Russian forces are probably trying to attack dams in Ukraine in order to flood Ukrainian military crossing points amid Russian concerns about battlefield setbacks, the latest UK Ministry of Defence briefing said. The strikes were "unlikely to have caused significant disruption to Ukrainian operations due to the distance between the damaged dams and the combat areas", it said.
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HEADLINE	09/25 Winter approaches Russia, Ukraine war
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/sep/25/winters-approach-sets-clock-ticking-for-ukraine-ru/
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — The onset of autumnal weather, with rains making fields too muddy for tanks, is beginning to cloud Ukraine's efforts to take back more Russian-held territory before winter freezes the battlefields, a Washington-based think tank said Sunday.</p> <p>Russia, meanwhile, pressed on with its call-up of hundreds of thousands of men to throw into the seven-month war, seeking to reverse its recent losses. It also deployed suicide drones Sunday against the Ukrainian port city of Odesa, Ukrainian authorities said. No casualties were immediately reported.</p> <p>The Russian mobilization - its first such call-up since World War II - is sparking protests in Russian cities, with fresh demonstrations Sunday.</p> <p>It is also opening splits in Europe about whether fighting-age Russian men fleeing in droves should be welcomed or turned away.</p> <p>For Ukrainian and Russian military planners, the clock is ticking, with the approach of winter expected to make fighting more complicated. Already, rainy weather is bringing muddy conditions that are starting to limit the mobility of tanks and other heavy weaponry, according to the Institute for the Study of War.</p> <p>But the think tank said Ukrainian forces are still gaining ground in their counteroffensive, launched in late August, that has spectacularly rolled back the Russian occupation across large areas of the northeast and which also prompted Russian President Vladimir Putin's new drive for reinforcements.</p> <p>The partial mobilization has triggered an exodus of men seeking to avoid the draft - and sharp differences of opinion in Europe about how to deal with them.</p>

Lithuania, a European Union member-country that borders Kaliningrad, a Russian Baltic Sea exclave, said it won't grant them asylum. "Russians should stay and fight. Against Putin," Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis tweeted.

His counterpart in Latvia, also an EU member and bordering Russia, said the exodus poses "considerable security risks" for the 27-nation bloc and that those fleeing can't be considered conscientious objectors against the invasion.

Many "were fine with killing Ukrainians, they did not protest then," the Latvian foreign minister, Edgars Rinkevics, tweeted. He added that they have "plenty of countries outside EU to go."

Officials in other EU nations, however, say Europe has a duty to help, and fear that turning away Russians could play into Putin's hands, feeding his narrative that the West has always hated Russians and that the war is being waged to safeguard their country against Western hostility.

"Closing our frontiers would fit neither with our values nor our interests," a 40-strong group of senators in France said in a statement. They urged the EU to grant refugee status to Russians fleeing mobilization and said turning them away would be "a mistake by Europe in the war of communication and influence that is playing out."

The mobilization is also running hand-in-hand with Kremlin-orchestrated votes in four occupied regions of Ukraine that could pave the way for their imminent annexation by Russia.

Ukraine and its Western allies say the referendums in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia in the south and the eastern Luhansk and Donetsk regions have no legal force. The votes are set to wrap up Tuesday but are being dismissed in Ukraine and the West as a sham, with footage showing armed Russian troops going door to door to pressure Ukrainians into voting.

Ukraine's Reintegration Ministry said Russia has brought people from Belarus, Brazil, Egypt, South Africa, Syria, Togo, Uruguay and Venezuela to act as supposed outside observers. The ministry warned that they "will be punished," without specifying how.

In cities across Russia, police have arrested hundreds of protesters against the mobilization order. Women opposed to the call-up protested Sunday in the Siberian city of Yakutsk. Videos shared by local media showed a crowd of a few hundred people, mostly women, holding hands and marching in a circle around a group of police. Police later dragged some away or forced them into police vans. News website SakhaDay said the women chanted pacifist slogans and songs.

At least 2,000 people have been arrested in recent days for similar demonstrations around the country. Many of those taken away immediately received call-up summons.

Other Russians are reporting for duty. Putin and Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu have said the order applies to reservists who recently served or have special skills, but almost every man is considered a reservist until age 65 and Putin's decree kept the door open for a broader call-up.

The Kremlin said its initial aim is to add about 300,000 troops to its forces in Ukraine, struggling with equipment losses, mounting casualties and weakening morale. The mobilization marks a sharp shift from Putin's previous efforts to portray the war as a limited military operation that wouldn't interfere with most Russians' lives.

The call-up is being accompanied by tougher punishments for Russian soldiers who disobey officers' orders, desert or surrender to the enemy. Putin signed those measures into law on Saturday.

The Ukrainian government stopped allowing most men ages 18-60 to leave the country immediately after Russia's Feb. 24 invasion under a general mobilization order intended to build a 1 million-strong military.

HEADLINE	09/25 Putin allies concern on mobilization issues
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/putin-allies-express-concern-over-mobilisation-excesses-2022-09-25/
GIST	<p>Sept 25 (Reuters) - Russia's two most senior lawmakers on Sunday addressed a string of complaints about Russia's mobilisation drive, ordering regional officials to get a handle on the situation and swiftly solve the "excesses" that have stoked public anger.</p> <p>President Vladimir Putin's move to order Russia's first military mobilisation since World War Two triggered protests across the country and seen flocks of military-age men flee, causing tailbacks at borders and flights to sell out.</p> <p>Multiple reports have also documented how people with no military service have been issued draft papers - contrary to Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu's guarantee that only those with special military skills or combat experience would be called up - prompting even ultra-loyal pro-Kremlin figures to publicly express concern.</p> <p>Russia's top two parliamentarians, both close Putin allies, explicitly addressed public anger at the way the mobilisation drive was unfolding.</p> <p>Valentina Matviyenko, the chairwoman of Russia's upper house, the Federation Council, said she was aware of reports of men who should be ineligible for the draft being called up.</p> <p>"Such excesses are absolutely unacceptable. And, I consider it absolutely right that they are triggering a sharp reaction in society," she said in a post on the Telegram messaging app.</p> <p>In a direct message to Russia's regional governors - who she said had "full responsibility" for implementing the call-up - she wrote: "Ensure the implementation of partial mobilisation is carried out in full and absolute compliance with the outlined criteria. Without a single mistake."</p> <p>Vyacheslav Volodin, speaker of the State Duma, Russia's lower chamber, also expressed concern in a separate post.</p> <p>"Complaints are being received," he said.</p> <p>"If a mistake is made, it is necessary to correct it ... Authorities at every level should understand their responsibilities."</p> <p>Officials say 300,000 more Russians will called up to serve in the mobilisation campaign. The Kremlin has twice denied it actually plans to draft more than one million, following two separate reports in independent Russian media outlets.</p> <p>Rights groups saying more than 2,000 have been detained at rallies against mobilisation in dozens of cities so far this week, with more protests already having been recorded on Sunday in Russia's Far East and Siberia.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/25 Historic storm slams Canada eastern coast
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/canada-girds-long-haul-after-historic-storm-fiona-ravages-east-coast-2022-09-25/
GIST	<p>STEPHENVILLE, Newfoundland, Sept 25 (Reuters) - After powerful storm Fiona left a trail of destruction in Canada's east coast on Saturday, the focus shifted to massive clean-up efforts, damage assessment and restoration of power and telecom services as officials warned of a long road to recovery.</p> <p>The historic storm slammed into eastern Canada with hurricane-force winds, forcing evacuations, uprooting trees and powerlines, and reducing many homes to "just a pile of rubble."</p>

The Canadian Hurricane Centre estimated that Fiona was the lowest pressured land falling storm on record in Canada.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Canadian armed forces will be deployed to help with the clean-up, adding that Fiona caused significant damage and recovery will require a big effort.

Despite the intensity of the storm, there were no serious injuries or deaths, which government officials said was a result of residents paying heed to the repeated warnings.

Still, thousands of residents across Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island (PEI) and Newfoundland were without power and dealing with patchy telecom connections, and government officials pleaded with residents for patience.

They warned that in some cases it would take weeks before essential services are fully restored.

"We do know that the damage is very extensive, quite likely the worst we have ever seen," Dennis King, PEI premier, told reporters on Saturday.

"Islanders ... should know that our road to recovery will be weeks or longer. It will be an all-hands on deck approach," he added.

Several university students lined up for food outside convenience stores powered by generators due to the power outage caused by Fiona. The Canadian Red Cross has launched a fund raising drive to support the affected people.

Government officials said the full-scale of the destruction will only be known in the coming days and weeks. But with the storm packing gusts of up to 170 km/hour sweeping away homes, bridges and roads, Fiona was reminiscent of the damage caused by other storms, including Hurricane Dorian in 2019, which is estimated to have had an insurance bill of C\$105 million.

Premiers of the affected provinces told the federal government they need long-term support around public and critical infrastructure after the storm tore off roofs of schools and community centers, as well as quick relief to businesses and families to get on with normal life quickly.

The storm also severely damaged fishing harbors in Atlantic Canada, which could hurt the country's C\$3.2 billion lobster industry, unless it is fully restored before the season kicks off in few weeks.

"Those fishers have a very immediate need to be able to access their livelihood once the storm passes," Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs of Canada, said on Saturday.

"So this is exactly the kind of work that will accompany provincial authorities in the coming weeks and months," he added.

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HEADLINE	09/25 Russia: 'full protection' of annexed areas
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/shelling-hits-southern-ukraine-russia-un-spotlight-over-escalation-2022-09-25/
GIST	<p>Sept 25 (Reuters) - Russia has sought to defend its seven-month old war at the United Nations, with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov saying that regions of Ukraine where widely-derided referendums are being held would be under Russia's "full protection" if annexed by Moscow.</p> <p>The referendums in four eastern Ukrainian regions, aimed at annexing territory Russia has taken by force since its invasion in February, entered their third day on Sunday and the Russian parliament could move to formalise the annexation within days.</p>

Ukraine and its Western allies have dismissed the referendums as a sham designed to justify an escalation of the war and a mobilisation drive by Moscow after recent battlefield losses.

President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday ordered Russia's first military mobilisation since World War Two, a move that triggered protests across the country and sent flocks of military-age men fleeing, causing tailbacks at borders and sold-out flights from the country.

Russia's two most senior lawmakers on Sunday addressed a string of complaints about the mobilisation, ordering regional officials to get a handle on the situation and swiftly solve the "excesses" that have stoked public anger.

Addressing the U.N. General Assembly and the world's media in New York on Saturday, Lavrov attempted to justify Russia's invasion of its neighbour, repeating Moscow's false claims that the elected government in Kyiv was illegitimately installed and filled with neo-Nazis.

He cast opposition to what Russia calls a "special operation" as limited to the United States and countries under its sway. Nearly three-quarters of states in the assembly voted to reprimand Russia and demand it withdraw its troops.

In a news conference following his speech Lavrov said the regions where votes are underway would be under Moscow's "full protection" if they are annexed by Russia.

Asked if Russia would have grounds for using nuclear weapons to defend the annexed regions, Lavrov said Russian territory, including territory "further enshrined" in Russia's constitution in the future, "is under the full protection of the state".

Ukraine's foreign minister, Dmytro Kuleba, said Russia's mentions of the possible use of nuclear weapons were "absolutely unacceptable" and Kyiv would not give into them.

LOOMING ANNEXATION

The Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament, may debate bills incorporating the Russian-occupied parts of Ukraine into Russia on Thursday, the state-run TASS news agency said on Saturday, citing an unnamed source.

The Interfax agency quoted a source saying the upper house could consider the bill the same day, and RIA Novosti, also citing an unnamed source, said Putin could be preparing to make a formal address to an extraordinary joint session of both houses on Friday.

The votes on becoming part of Russia were hastily organised after Ukraine recaptured large swathes of the northeast in a counter-offensive this month.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said the votes would be "unequivocally condemned" by the world. Russia says the referendums offer an opportunity for people in those regions to express their view.

Ukraine and Russia traded accusations on Sunday of attacks on civilians, with Ukraine's military saying that Russian forces had launched dozens of missile attacks and air strikes on military and civilian targets in the past 24 hours.

Russia also used drones to attack the centre of the southern city of Odesa, Ukraine's military said. No casualties were reported.

Russia denies deliberately attacking civilians. Its RIA state news agency reported that Ukrainian forces bombed a hotel in the city of Kherson, killing two people. Russian forces have occupied the southern city since the early days of the invasion on Feb. 24.

	<p>There was no immediate response from Ukraine.</p> <p>Reuters could not verify either side's claims.</p> <p>Putin's mobilisation drive has stirred unrest in Russia. More than 2,000 people have been detained across the country for protesting against the draft, including 798 people in 33 towns on Saturday, according to independent monitoring group OVD-Info.</p> <p>When asked on Saturday why so many Russians were leaving the country, Lavrov pointed to the right of freedom of movement.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/25 NKorea fires ballistic missile into sea
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/nkorea-fires-ballistic-missile-skorea-military-2022-09-24/
GIST	<p>SEOUL, Sept 25 (Reuters) - North Korea fired a ballistic missile towards the sea off its east coast on Sunday, ahead of planned military drills by South Korean and U.S. forces involving an aircraft carrier and a visit to the region by U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris.</p> <p>South Korea's military said it was a single, short-range ballistic missile fired from near the Taechon area of North Pyongyan Province just before 7 a.m. local time and flew about 600 km (373 miles) at an altitude of 60 km and a speed of Mach 5.</p> <p>"North Korea's launch of a ballistic missile is an act of grave provocation that threatens the peace and security of the Korean peninsula and international community," South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.</p> <p>After the launch, the Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Kim Seung-kyum and the U.S. Forces Korea Commander Paul LaCamera discussed the situation and reaffirmed their readiness to respond to any threat or provocation from North Korea, it added.</p> <p>South Korea's National Security Council held an emergency meeting to discuss response measures and condemned the launch as an apparent violation of the U.N. Security Council Resolutions and an unjustifiable act of provocation.</p> <p>South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol, who arrived in Seoul late on Saturday from a trip to Britain, the United States and Canada, was briefed on the launch, the presidential office said.</p> <p>Japan's Defence Minister Yasukazu Hamada said Japan estimated the missile reached maximum altitude at 50 km and may have flown on an irregular trajectory. Hamada said it fell outside Japan's exclusive economic zone and there were no reports of problems with shipping or air traffic.</p> <p>Many of the short-range missiles tested by North Korea in recent years have been designed to evade missile defences by manoeuvring during flight and flying on a lower, "depressed" trajectory, experts have said.</p> <p>"If you include launches of cruise missiles this is the nineteenth launch, which is an unprecedented pace," Hamada said.</p> <p>"North Korea's action represents a threat to the peace and security of our country, the region and the international community and to do this as the Ukraine invasion unfolds is unforgivable," he said, adding that Japan had delivered a protest through North Korea's embassy in Beijing.</p> <p>The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said it was aware of the launch and consulting closely with allies, in a statement released after the launch, while reaffirming U.S. commitment to the defence of South Korea and Japan.</p>

"While we have assessed that this event does not pose an immediate threat to U.S. personnel or territory, or to our allies, the missile launch highlights the destabilising impact of the DPRK's unlawful Weapons of Mass Destruction and ballistic missile programs."

JOINT DRILLS

The launch comes after the arrival of the nuclear-powered American aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan in South Korea to participate in joint drills with South Korean forces for four days from Sept. 26 to 29, and ahead of a planned visit to Seoul this week by Harris. [read more](#)

It was the first time the North carried out such a launch after firing eight short-range ballistic missiles in one day in early June, which led the United States to call for more sanctions for violating U.N. Security Council resolutions.

North Korea rejects U.N. resolutions as an infringement of its sovereign right to self defence and space exploration, and has criticized previous joint drills by the United States and South Korea as proof of their hostile policies.

The drills have also been criticised by Russia and China, which have called on all sides not to take steps that raise tensions in the region, and have called for an easing of sanctions.

After North Korea conducted an unprecedented number of missile tests this year, including its intercontinental ballistic missiles for the first time since 2017, the United States and South Korea said they would boost joint drills and military displays of power to deter Pyongyang.

"Defense exercises are not going to prevent North Korean missile tests," said Leif-Eric Easley, an international affairs professor at Ewha University in Seoul.

But U.S.-South Korea security cooperation helps to deter a North Korean attack and counter Pyongyang's coercion, and the allies should not let provocations stop them from conducting military training and exchanges needed to maintain the alliance, he added.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported on Saturday that North Korea may also be preparing to test a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), citing the South's military.

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HEADLINE	09/24 Russia to UN: forced to invade Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/09/24/US-Russia-Ukraine-Lavrov-United-Nations/7801664052627/
GIST	<p>Sept. 24 (UPI) -- Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told the United Nations Saturday that Russia had no choice but to invade Ukraine because of the "inability" of Western countries to negotiate.</p> <p>Seven months to the day that Russia invaded Ukraine, Lavrov accused the West of throwing a fit over the referendum being conducted in the Donbas and other Russian-controlled areas. The areas are voting on whether or not to become part of the Russian federation.</p> <p>Soldiers going door-to-door in Russian-occupied parts of Ukraine have been met with protests during Saturday's second day of referendum voting, official media reported, as the G7 nations condemned the poll as a sham.</p> <p>Rallies were held in several Ukrainian cities as people urged their fellow residents not to take part in the five-day vote now underway in the Luhansk, Kherson, Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions, according to the Ukrinform press agency.</p> <p>Lavrov on Saturday also accused the West of trying to militarily defeat and fracture Russia.</p>

	<p>"What they want to do is to remove from the global map, a geopolitical entity, which has become all too independent," he said.</p> <p>He ended his speech by saying that he was convinced that the stability of the world could be ensured, by returning to "the origins of UN diplomacy."</p>
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HEADLINE	09/23 ER doctors: rise in violence from patients
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Health_News/2022/09/23/emergency-room-doctors-patient-violence/8751663944783/
GIST	<p>The stories grabbed headlines during the pandemic: Violent episodes in U.S. emergency rooms where patients attacked doctors.</p> <p>A new poll shows how widespread the problem has become: Two-thirds of emergency physicians reported being assaulted in the past year, while more than one-third of respondents said they have been assaulted more than once. Even worse, about 80% of emergency physicians reported an increasing rate of violence, with 45% saying it had "greatly increased" over the past five years.</p> <p>"Violence in the emergency department continues to threaten and harm emergency physicians and patients," said Dr. Chris Kang, president-elect of the American College of Emergency Physicians, which conducted the poll. "Over the past five years, emergency physicians have witnessed and experienced a steady increase in assaults made worse by the pandemic. This report underscores how attacks on emergency physicians, care teams and staff are rampant and must be addressed."</p> <p>The findings, gathered in 2022, update a similar poll taken in 2018.</p> <p>"Emergency physicians should not have to compromise their duty to care for patients because of their injuries and worries about their personal safety," Kang said in an ACEP news release. "In addition to physical risks, the persistent threat of violence detracts from patient care and contributes significantly to emergency physicians' mental health challenges and burnout."</p> <p>COVID-19 has had an impact, chilling trust while increasing violence between patients, the care team and staff, according to the ACEP.</p> <p>About two-thirds of emergency physicians said they believed the pandemic had triggered an increase in the amount of violence in emergency departments. About 69% said the pandemic had decreased the level of trust between patients and emergency department staff.</p> <p>The violence has had a negative impact on patient care, according to 89% of those surveyed. How? It has increased wait times and has led to patients leaving the emergency department without being seen by a doctor.</p> <p>About 87% of emergency physicians said they had lost productivity because of the violence, while 85% reported emotional trauma and an increase in anxiety.</p> <p>"As emergency departments are no longer respected as safe zones, inadequate protections for emergency medical professionals and staff, and patients, combined with insufficient accountability from hospitals, communities and assailants, can only encourage violence to continue," Kang said. "We must do more to make sure that physicians and staff can perform their duties without needing to worry about threats to their well-being or safety."</p> <p>The poll included 2,712 U.S. emergency physicians and was conducted online between July 25 and Aug. 1.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/24 Young protesters demand climate action
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/protesters-fear-climate-change-impacts-demand-aid-for-poor/
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (AP) — Frustrated, anxious but also a tad hopeful, young activists staged a coordinated “global climate strike” Friday to highlight the effects of global warming and demand more aid for poor countries hit by wild weather.</p> <p>In New York, as leaders of developing disaster-struck nations pleaded their cases at the United Nations, more than a thousand protesters, many of them skipping school, marched through the streets to tell their leaders they were sick of inaction on climate.</p> <p>“The oceans are rising and so are we,” they chanted. Protesters also took to the streets in Jakarta, Tokyo, Rome, Berlin and Montreal carrying banners and posters with slogans such as, “It’s not too late.”</p> <p>“It’s one thing to worry about the future, and it’s another to get out there and do something about it,” said 16-year-old Lucia Dec-Prat at the protest in New York. “I honestly feel that the adults aren’t listening.”</p> <p>Dinah Landsman, 17, said every day she asks herself about what kind of future she’ll have as she grows up because of climate change. Her generation has to act, she said.</p> <p>“No one else is going to do it,” said Landsman, also in New York. “It’s us who have the most at stake.”</p> <p>The protests follow warnings from scientists that countries aren’t doing enough to meet the 2015 Paris climate accord’s top-line target of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) this century compared to preindustrial times.</p> <p>Michael Taft, a 27-year-old graduate student in New York, said “a lot of kids here are scared about what the next 20 years are going to look like for them.”</p> <p>But Taft said he still has hope. He looks around at those listening to the speakers and said they aren’t like past generations. They aren’t looking to become finance majors and make lots of money.</p> <p>“They’re all here because they’re motivated to make change,” Taft said. “And probably one of the people here or in another climate rally in a different country is going to be the person that has a massive role in change and fixing this.”</p> <p>The demonstrations were organized by the Fridays for Future movement that took its cue from activist Greta Thunberg, who began protesting alone outside the Swedish parliament in 2018.</p> <p>“We’re striking all over the world because the governments in charge are still doing too little for climate justice,” said Darya Sotoodeh, a spokesperson for the group’s chapter in Germany.</p> <p>“People all over the world are suffering from this crisis, and it’s going to get worse if we don’t act on time,” she said.</p> <p>Police said some 20,000 people attended the rally in Berlin, which featured calls for the German government to establish a 100-billion-euro fund for tackling climate change.</p> <p>In Rome, some 5,000 young people turned out for a march that ended near the Colosseum.</p> <p>One placard read: “The climate is changing. Why aren’t we?” Students highlighted among their priorities the need to rethink Italy’s transport policies. The country’s ratio of cars to inhabitant is one of the highest in Europe.</p> <p>In Italy’s election campaign, which wraps up on Friday evening ahead of the Sept. 25 vote for Parliament, climate change policies didn’t figure heavily at candidates’ rallies.</p>

	<p>U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told world leaders this week that the fossil fuel industry, which is responsible for a large share of planet-warming gases, is “feasting on hundreds of billions of dollars in subsidies and windfall profits while household budgets shrink and our planet burns.”</p> <p>Guterres urged rich countries to tax the profits of energy companies and redirect the funds to both “countries suffering loss and damage caused by the climate crisis” and those struggling with the rising cost of living.</p> <p>Demands for poor nations to receive greater financial help to cope with global warming, including the destruction already wrought by deadly weather events such as the floods in Pakistan, have grown louder in the run-up to this year’s U.N. climate summit.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/24 WSU president declares Wazzu no more
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/Wazzu-no-more-declares-WSU-president-1085972.php
GIST	<p>SPOKANE -- You can call Washington State University a lot of things. Just don't call it Wazzu.</p> <p>University President V. Lane Rawlins wants the word purged from T-shirts, coffee mugs and other school-related products on the grounds it is vaguely derogatory and plays to the perception that WSU is a place where booze trumps books.</p> <p>"We love the name Wazzu," WSU marketing director Mary Gresch insisted. "But we want to emphasize the full name of the university."</p> <p>Washington State University, Washington State or WSU are the acceptable options for referring to the land grant institution based in Pullman.</p> <p>That's a tough sell in Cougar Nation.</p> <p>"I think it is ridiculous," said Tracy Dullum, who sells WSU souvenirs at the Web site Cougarwear.com. "The Wazzu logo is one of the highest-selling logos on my site."</p> <p>It's unclear when the term Wazzu was coined for the school, but for decades it has been deeply ingrained in the lexicon of the Palouse.</p> <p>All manner of souvenirs for sale in the school bookstore are adorned with the nickname. Web sites for professors, fraternities and other WSU institutions can be located by typing Wazzu into a search engine.</p> <p>Still, there are Cougar alumni who find the old nickname as popular as a three-touchdown Husky lead.</p> <p>"I for a long time have hated the term Wazzu," said Tim Pavish, a 1980 graduate of the Edward R. Murrow School of Communications at WSU. "I thought it was disrespectful to the university."</p> <p>Pavish is a managing partner of DDB Worldwide Communications, an advertising and public relations firm in Seattle, and deals with issues of public perception all the time.</p> <p>"In this case the name really does have an impact on the perception of the university," Pavish said.</p> <p>He acknowledges that many WSU graduates consider Wazzu a term of endearment, but they should realize that people outside the school's community use it as a negative reference.</p> <p>Pavish is willing to risk becoming a public scold in his crusade to kill use of Wazzu.</p> <p>"Every time I hear someone use the term, I personally ask them not to," Pavish said.</p>

Return to Top	<p>The casual nickname of the Cougars' cross-state archrival University of Washington -- the "U-Dub" -- does not have nearly the negative connotations of Wazzu, Pavish said.</p> <p>Gresch said the university owns the trademark rights to the name Wazzu, and must keep using it to some degree to retain those rights. Thus, Wazzu might still show up in a minor way on some products, such as the back of baseball caps or on shirt sleeves, she said.</p> <p>But Rawlins and other school officials want to "bring discipline to our name," Gresch said.</p> <p>There has not been a formal policy change regarding use of Wazzu, Gresch said, because that has never been an official name for the university.</p> <p>"It's a secondary name, not a primary name, and we are treating it that way," Gresch said.</p> <p>The effort is consistent with other recent changes, such as a new WSU logo, designed to standardize and better position WSU in public perceptions, Gresch said.</p> <p>School officials do not fear loss of income. Items with the term Wazzu account for only about 2 percent of sales among items trademarked by the university, she said.</p> <p>"Most alumni buy items with 'Washington State' or 'Cougars' on them," she said.</p> <p>Dullum has an expression for people who don't like the name Wazzu: "Not real Cougars!" she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/23 Judge: can't fire NYPD cops refusing vax
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/nypd-officers-cant-be-fired-for-refusing-covid-19-vaccine-judge-rules-11663971932?mod=hp_listb_pos4
GIST	<p>New York City police officers can't be fired for refusing to get vaccinated against Covid-19, a state judge ruled Friday.</p> <p>State Supreme Court Justice Lyle Frank, sitting in Manhattan, said officers who were fired or placed on leave as a result of the policy should be reinstated.</p> <p>Thousands of city employees sought religious exemptions or refused to comply with vaccine mandates that former New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio announced in October last year, just before the Omicron variant produced a surge in cases in the city.</p> <p>Some public employees and unions challenged them, but the mandates were kept in place by state and federal judges. The current case, brought by the Police Benevolent Association of the City of New York, argued that penalties for noncompliance, including suspension and termination, could be arrived at only through collective bargaining.</p> <p>"To be unequivocally clear, this Court does not deny that at the time it was issued the vaccine mandate was appropriate and lawful," Justice Frank wrote in the four-page decision.</p> <p>"The Court however does not see, nor have respondents established a legal basis or lawful authority for the [Health Department] to exclude employees from the workplace and impose any other adverse employment action as an appropriate enforcement mechanism of the vaccine mandate."</p> <p>The ruling came days after New York City Mayor Eric Adams said he was dropping the city's private-sector vaccine mandate but leaving in place requirements for roughly 160,000 municipal workers.</p>

	<p>The city's Health Department reported a daily average of 2,121 cases on Friday, compared with almost 44,000 in early January. There were 826 people hospitalized with Covid-19 in New York City, according to the New York State Department of Health, compared with a peak of more than 12,000 in April 2020.</p> <p>A spokesman for the city's law department said it would immediately appeal the ruling, which it said was "at odds with every other court decision upholding the mandate as a condition of employment."</p> <p>Spokespeople for the NYPD and the PBA declined to say how many officers have been terminated or placed on leave as a result of the vaccine mandate.</p> <p>PBA President Patrick Lynch said the mandate was "an improper infringement on our members' right to make personal medical decisions in consultation with their own health care professionals. We will continue to protect those rights."</p>
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HEADLINE	09/24 China stresses Taiwan stance at UN
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-stresses-its-taiwan-stance-at-u-n-11664046492?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1
GIST	<p>NEW YORK—China's foreign minister promoted one issue above all others in a flurry of diplomatic meetings at the United Nations this week: Beijing's sovereignty over Taiwan.</p> <p>Addressing the U.N. on Saturday on behalf of President Xi Jinping, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi described Taiwan as China's sovereign territory since ancient times and vowed resolute action to forestall separatist activity.</p> <p>"Only when China is completely reunified can there be enduring peace across the Taiwan Strait," Mr. Wang told the General Assembly. He added, "Any scheme to interfere in China's international affairs is bound to meet a strong opposition of all Chinese, and any move to obstruct China's reunification is bound to be crushed by the wheels of history."</p> <p>The unsettled status of Taiwan—a democratically governed island claimed by China but not controlled by it—is increasingly at the center of a deteriorating U.S.-China relationship. While Mr. Wang didn't directly call out recent U.S. activity in his U.N. address, he said publicly during the week that Taiwan holds the key to future ties between Washington and Beijing.</p> <p>President Biden this week told the U.N. that the American position on Taiwan hasn't changed and that Washington doesn't want a Cold War with China. But he said, the U.S. will be "unabashed in promoting our vision of a free, open, secure, and prosperous world and what we have to offer communities of nations."</p> <p>The U.S. subscribes to a "One China" policy but doesn't take a position on unification. Beijing says U.S. arms sales to Taiwan and rhetorical support for the island's leadership, including statements from Mr. Biden that the U.S. military would under some circumstances defend Taiwan, undermine Washington's claims that its policy hasn't changed.</p> <p>While the lengthiest section of his roughly 20-minute U.N. speech was related to Taiwan, Mr. Wang also said Beijing favors a global order based on multipolarity and he briefly touched on development and security initiatives promoted by Mr. Xi.</p> <p>On Ukraine, Mr. Wang told U.N. delegates, the "most pressing priority is to facilitate talks for peace" but that a final solution will need to address "the legitimate security concerns of all parties." Chinese Foreign Ministry summaries of Mr. Wang's meetings in New York separately with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba made similar points—and quoted both the Russian and Ukraine officials as reiterating their commitment to a One China policy.</p>

	<p>In his speech Saturday, Mr. Wang said China is sincere in desiring a peaceful unification with Taiwan but said it “must combat Taiwan independence separatist activities with the firmest resolve.” After a congressional delegation led by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in August, China’s military flew missiles over the island and practiced a naval blockade around it while claiming such visits encourage politicians on the island to pursue independence.</p> <p>Mr. Wang emphasized that point on Friday in a bilateral meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, during which he cited “recent wrongful moves by the U.S.” regarding Taiwan that he said reflect a current “China policy guided by containment and suppression,” according to Xinhua News Agency. Mr. Blinken emphasized a U.S. commitment to maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait, consistent with a longstanding One China policy, according to a U.S. summary of their meeting.</p> <p>“I think it’s fair to say this was a primary topic of conversation today,” said a senior State Department official.</p> <p>The U.S.-China relationship represents a clash of ideologies that pits the world’s two most powerful militaries and biggest economies against each other, creating discomfort for many other nations.</p> <p>In his U.N. address on Wednesday, Mr. Biden said the different international strategies of the U.S. and China are part of “the contest between democracy and autocracy.” A day later, China’s Mr. Wang rejected the democracy-autocracy formulation as a “false narrative” and said U.S. “threat inflation” about China is merely a reflection of anxiety in Washington due to waning confidence in its own system.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/24 Russia expands use of Iran combat drones
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-expands-use-of-iranian-combat-drones-in-ukraine-11664009458
GIST	<p>Ukraine shot down more than a dozen Iranian combat drones across the front lines this week as Russia expands the use of a foreign-weapons system that Ukrainian commanders say has inflicted serious damage on their forces.</p> <p>In his nightly address on Friday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said his country’s anti-aircraft forces had shot down Iranian drones in the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region and the southern city of Odessa, including the nearby Pivdennyi port, used for exporting grain.</p> <p>In Russia, renewed protests against President Vladimir Putin’s order to mobilize new forces to bolster his flagging offensive in Ukraine led to hundreds of detentions across the country on Saturday.</p> <p>The Ukrainian Air Force identified the weapons shot down as Shahed-136 unmanned kamikaze drones, or loitering munitions, and Mohajer-6 drones that can carry missiles and be used for reconnaissance. It published a video showing one of the drones it shot out of the sky in the Dnipropetrovsk region.</p> <p>The Iranian drones are relatively small and fly at a very low altitude, making it hard for Ukrainian air-defense systems to detect them. At least one of the drones made it past Ukrainian defenses, hitting the navy’s headquarters in Odessa on Friday. Ukraine’s southern military command said one civilian was killed and an administration building in the port area was destroyed.</p> <p>Footage broadcast by Ukrainian news channels showed soldiers unsuccessfully trying to shoot it down with small arms before it crashed in a ball of fire. Soldiers can be heard shouting, “Where the hell is air defense?”</p> <p>Another online video showed one of the downed drones being towed in the water to shore.</p> <p>The air force said it had destroyed seven more Iranian drones, including four Shahed-136s, in the southern Mykolaiv region on Thursday, and another one on Tuesday.</p>

Shahed-136 delta-wing drones, repainted in Russian colors and rebranded as Geranium 2, started appearing this month over Ukrainian armor and artillery positions in the northeastern Kharkiv region, said Col. Rodion Kulagin, commander of artillery of Ukraine's 92nd Mechanized Brigade.

In his brigade's operational area alone, the Iranian drones—which usually fly in pairs and then slam into their targets—have destroyed two 152-mm self-propelled howitzers and two 122-mm self-propelled howitzers, as well as two BTR armored infantry vehicles, Col. Kulagin said.

Russia's use of Shahed-136 drones in Ukraine represents the most challenging expansion of Tehran's arsenal beyond the Middle East, where Iran [has used its unmanned aerial vehicles](#) to pressure the U.S. and its allies in the region. It also highlights the deficiencies in Russia's own drone program, which hasn't been able to match the firepower of armed UAVs deployed by Ukraine.

The immediate battlefield impact of the introduction of Iranian drones into Ukraine war is difficult to assess, but the deployment gives Tehran an opportunity to test out its products against North Atlantic Treaty Organization defense systems, said Bernard Hudson, former counterterrorism director for the Central Intelligence Agency.

“This allows Tehran a risk-free path to improve their drone technology and tactics and to make them more capable and lethal. The lessons of Ukraine will inform how Iran will later use these systems in the Middle East,” said Mr. Hudson, founder and chief executive of Looking Glass Global Services, which works in the drone sector in Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

Late Friday, Mr. Zelensky said Ukraine had revoked the accreditation of the Iranian ambassador and had reduced the number of diplomatic personnel at the Iranian Embassy in Kyiv in response to Iran sending the drones. He said he had tasked the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry with developing a response to [Iranian support of Russia](#): “The world will know about every fact of collaboration with evil.”

Israel and the West have accused Iran and its proxies of flying armed drones to attack [Saudi Arabia's oil industry](#), the [capital of the United Arab Emirates](#) and [American soldiers in Syria](#), as well as tankers in the Gulf of Oman in recent years. Iran-backed Houthi forces in Yemen have repeatedly used delta-wing drones to carry out attacks on neighboring Saudi Arabia.

In an interview published Saturday by French newspaper Ouest-France, Mr. Zelensky said he regretted that Israel hadn't provided Ukraine with anti-aircraft defenses. “This shocks me because at the same time Israel exports its armaments to other countries,” he said, blaming Russian influence in Israel. Israel has previously said that it opposed Russia's invasion of Ukraine but that it will provide humanitarian rather than military aid.

Ukraine has asked Western allies, which have already supplied billions of dollars' worth of military equipment, to supply more advanced anti-drone and air-defense technologies.

In a separate incident, Ukraine's southern military command said Saturday that an unmanned aircraft had dropped a poisonous chemical substance on Ukrainian positions, without specifying the location. It said there were no significant casualties.

In Russia, Col. Gen. Mikhail Mizintsev, [who was sanctioned](#) by the European Union in June for overseeing the bombardment of the [strategic Ukrainian port city of Mariupol](#), was promoted to deputy defense minister for logistics on Saturday. Since the beginning of the war, Russia's army has struggled with supplying and maintaining its troops in the field and providing them with adequate equipment, critically hobbling Moscow's invasion plans.

Russians on Saturday turned out to protest in more than a dozen cities nationwide against Mr. Putin's order to mobilize hundreds of thousands of people to fight in Ukraine. Also Saturday, Mr. Putin signed into law fresh legislation punishing soldiers who refuse to fight, desert the army or surrender with up to 10 years in prison.

	<p>In Moscow, riot police detained protesters en masse and with force, carrying them by their limbs and the scruff of their necks and stuffing them into police wagons. Most protesters weren't able to pull out placards before they were detained.</p> <p>The rallies were the second this week after protests broke out in the wake of Mr. Putin's directive on Wednesday. That evening demonstrators chanted "Let our children live!" and "Send Putin to the trenches!" Officers detained more than 1,400 people across the country and handed draft notices to some protesters right at the police station, according to the independent Russian OVD-Info rights monitor and interviews by The Wall Street Journal.</p> <p>As of Saturday evening, another nearly 750 people had been detained, according to OVD-Info.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/24 Pensions brace for private equity losses
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/pensions-brace-for-private-equity-losses-11663985240?mod=hp_lead_pos1
GIST	<p>Public pension funds are already reporting big losses in 2022. Things are likely to get uglier.</p> <p>That is because the funds, which manage around \$5 trillion in retirement savings for the nation's teachers, firefighters and other public workers, haven't yet factored in second-quarter returns on private equity and other illiquid investments.</p> <p>"You should expect sometime over the next three to four quarters to see write-downs in the illiquid part of the portfolio," Allan Emkin, a consultant to large pension funds with Meketa Investment Group, told the board of the \$300 billion California State Teachers' Retirement System last month.</p> <p>The losses are yet another example of how the current market tumult offers almost no place to hide, and that even the investments usually considered havens are slumping. The Dow Jones Industrial Average on Friday closed at its lowest level of 2022, weighed down by concerns about inflation, weak global growth and whether the Federal Reserve's rate-raising campaign will tip the U.S. into recession.</p> <p>Public pensions have faced a funding crunch for years. Many have increasingly turned to private equity and other nontraditional investments over the past few years in hopes of plugging their shortfalls.</p> <p>When pension returns fall short of targets, typically around 7% annualized, the states and cities sponsoring those pensions pay higher annual retirement contributions to make up the difference. Sometimes they must raise taxes or cut services to find the extra money.</p> <p>Public pensions reported returning a median minus 7.9% for the fiscal year ended June 30, their worst losses since 2009, according to data from Wilshire Trust Universe Comparison Service published in The Wall Street Journal last month.</p> <p>But the only performance figures from this year's brutal second quarter reflected in that 7.9% figure are for traditional publicly traded investments like stocks and bonds. The private-market returns baked into that figure are for the 12 months ended March 31, and include double-digit private-equity gains for the second quarter of 2021.</p> <p>In the coming weeks and months, public pension funds will calculate the second-quarter performance of their private-market assets based on estimates they receive from investment managers. Warning signs are already visible in the secondary market, where investors can buy and sell private-equity assets midway through the life of the investments.</p> <p>Investors who bought private-equity assets on the secondary market this year paid an average 86% of the value assigned to those assets in 2021, according to data collected by investment bank Jefferies LLC from</p>

transactions it worked on. While assets often sell at a discount in secondary trading, that was the lowest figure since data collection began in 2016.

Private-equity portfolios containing the debt or equity of struggling companies declined the most, Jefferies said. Those containing real-estate-related companies suffered the least, with infrastructure and industrial properties in particular demand. High supply likely also pushed down secondary-market prices, analysts said.

“We expect the absolute return of private equity to decline in the coming quarters,” Greg Ruiz, head of private equity at the \$440 billion California Public Employees’ Retirement System, told board members Monday.

State and local plans [held about \\$480 billion in private equity](#) in 2021, up from \$300 billion in 2018, according to estimates based on data from analytics company Preqin and the Federal Reserve. Illiquid assets including private equity represented nearly a quarter of their portfolios.

Institutions typically invest in private equity by turning over cash to a money manager who pools it with other investors’ money and uses it to buy, overhaul and sell private companies over a decade or so. While the investor might receive some money during that time, the overall performance of the investment won’t become clear until the final payout.

In the interim, the investor relies on the manager to provide an estimate each quarter of what the investment is worth. Managers come up with these estimates by trying to assess the current value of the private companies they hold based on a mix of factors, such as internal or outside evaluations of the companies’ current and future performance, and the trading prices of comparable public companies.

Andy Nick, a managing director at Jefferies’ private capital advisory arm, said private-equity managers tend to understate both gains and losses during individual reporting periods by factoring them over a longer period. He predicted that managers won’t price in the full extent of this year’s losses until December, when auditors review their accounting.

“You’ll have the quarterly marks but that’s as good as the paper it’s written on,” Mr. Nick said.

Private-equity investments have outperformed stocks over the very long term, according to a private-equity index maintained by the data analytics firm Burgiss that doesn’t include venture capital. For the three decades ended June 30, 2021, the Burgiss index yielded an annual return of close to 14%, about 3 percentage points more than the S&P 500.

However, the gap has all but disappeared as more investors have crowded into private equity. Over the 10 years ended June 30, 2021, the yield was the same as the S&P 500, 14.8%.

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HEADLINE	09/24 Day 213 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/24/russia-ukraine-war-latest-what-we-know-on-day-213-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The UN has said its investigators have concluded that Russia committed war crimes in Ukraine, including bombings of civilian areas, numerous executions, torture and horrific sexual violence. The team of three independent experts had launched initial investigations looking at the areas of Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv and Sumy regions, where they were “struck by the large number of executions in the areas that we visited”, and the frequent “visible signs of executions on bodies, such as hands tied behind backs, gunshot wounds to the head and slit throats”.• Long lines of vehicles continued to form at Russia’s border crossings on the second day full day of Vladimir Putin’s military mobilisation. The president’s announcement of the first mobilisation since the second world war has led to a rush among men of military age to leave the country, with some men waiting more than 24 hours or resorting to using bicycles and scooters to

	<p>skip the miles-long queue of traffic jams. Traffic into Finland across its south-eastern border with Russia continues to be busy, the Finnish border force said.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finnish ministers on Friday evening announced that the government would prohibit Russian tourists from crossing its borders over the next few days. “The aspiration and purpose is to significantly reduce the number of people coming to Finland from Russia,” president Sauli Niinistö told state broadcaster Yle. • The United States is prepared to impose additional economic costs on Russia in conjunction with American allies if Russia moves forward with Ukraine annexation, the White House said on Friday. Russia has been planning what the US has described as sham referendums in portions of eastern Ukraine in what is seen as a step toward annexing these territories. • So-called referendums are under way in areas of Ukraine occupied by Russian troops, with residents told to vote on proposals for the four Ukrainian regions to declare independence and then join Russia. The polls in Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia provinces are due to run until Tuesday and appear to be a thin attempt to provide cover for illegal annexation of the regions by Moscow. • Some residents are ignoring the vote, Andriy Yusov, a Ukrainian defence intelligence official, told CNN. Ukraine’s state security service has claimed the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic, held by Russian-backed separatists, planned to allow teenagers aged under 18 to cast their votes. • The “referendums” have been widely condemned in the west as illegitimate. Britain’s ambassador to Ukraine, Melinda Simmons, described the “sham referenda” as “a media exercise” by Russia, for whom the outcomes have been “almost certainly already decided”. Nato described the “referendums” as Moscow’s “blatant attempts at territorial conquest” and said they have no legitimacy. G7 leaders said they would never recognise the “sham” referendums in a joint statement. • Ukraine said on Friday it had shot down four Iranian-made “kamikaze” drones used by Russia’s armed forces, prompting president Volodymyr Zelenskiy to complain that Tehran was harming Ukrainian citizens. Ukraine and the US have accused Iran of supplying drones to Russia, something Tehran has denied. Zelenskiy had asked his foreign ministry to respond to the use of Iranian equipment, spokesperson Serhii Nykyforov said. • Russia will continue its communication with the United Nations about a deal to export grain from Ukrainian ports but says concrete results are needed, Tass news agency cited a senior official as saying on Friday. It also cited the deputy foreign minister, Sergei Vershinin, as saying Russia had a positive assessment of the UN’s efforts to resume the export of Russian fertilisers. • Ukraine’s armed forces said it has liberated another settlement in the Donetsk region and improved their positions around the eastern town of Bakhmut. The village of Yatskivka in Donetsk region is now in Ukrainian hands, according to Oleksii Hromov, deputy head of the operations directorate of the general staff of Ukraine’s armed forces. • China’s foreign minister has told his Ukrainian counterpart that the “sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries must be respected”. The meeting between Wang Yi and Dmytro Kuleba took place on the sidelines of the UN general assembly in New York, and was the first since Russia invaded Ukraine. Kuleba said Wang had “reaffirmed China’s respect for Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity”.
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HEADLINE	09/24 Missile strikes hit Ukraine cities
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/24/ukraine-cities-missile-strikes-russia-partial-mobilisation
GIST	<p>Russia launched renewed strikes on Ukrainian cities on Saturday, as Moscow’s mobilisation drive to refresh its struggling war effort continued to provide scenes of chaos across Russia.</p> <p>Ukrainian officials said a Russian missile hit an apartment building in the city of Zaporizhzhia, killing one person and injuring seven others, and said a total of three people were killed and 19 injured in strikes across the south and east of the country.</p>

In Russia, even Kremlin cheerleaders expressed unease at the progress of the mobilisation drive, announced by the president, [Vladimir Putin](#), on Wednesday. Viral videos have shown mobilised men who appear variously to be confused, drunk or angry at receiving the call-up.

There are many reports of local authorities rounding up people who have not served before, have illnesses or are over 50, contradicting Putin's announcement of a "partial mobilisation" that would only involve those with military experience. There are reports of men and women with young children being mobilised, and many videos of emotional family farewells.

Margarita Simonyan, the hawkish head of propaganda outlet [RT](#), complained that military offices across the country were rounding up those who were not supposed to be called up. "It's as if they were tasked by Kyiv to do that," she said, in a rare criticism of authorities.

The mobilisation drive is a huge gamble by Putin after months in which the war in Ukraine has been portrayed as a "special operation" that would be completed without bloodshed. Now, the call-up brings the war closer to home for hundreds of thousands of families, and has prompted [a race for the borders](#) for many Russian men eager to avoid the draft.

There was a fresh wave of anti-war and anti-mobilisation protests in cities across Russia on Saturday, although the numbers were small as police have cracked down harshly on previous protests.

In the far-eastern city of Khabarovsk, one man was detained for a sign that read: "Mobilise yourself, you lice-infested rat." Protests were expected in Moscow and St Petersburg late in the afternoon.

A further sign of problems in Moscow came as the defence ministry sacked Gen Dmitry Bulgakov, the deputy minister in charge of logistics. The ministry gave no reason for firing Bulgakov, who had worked in the role for many years.

"The top appears to be looking for people to blame at the moment. Someone had to be punished, and [minister of defence Sergei] Shoigu doesn't want to put the blame on the generals, on the military," said a former defence ministry official who has worked with Bulgakov.

"The mantra is: 'We are fighting well but not just getting the logistics we need, we aren't getting our breakfast on time,' so to speak. It is not the fault of the guys fighting."

The New York Times [reported](#) on Saturday that Putin has taken personal control of the war effort, citing US officials briefed on classified intelligence who suggest the Russian president has overruled military commanders, insisting, for example, that the Russian army should not prepare a retreat from the city of Kherson.

The mobilisation drive comes as [Russia is holding "referendums"](#) in areas of Ukraine it controls, in which the remaining residents are asked whether they favour their regions becoming independent states and then joining Russia.

The votes, which have been [widely dismissed as illegitimate](#) in Kyiv and the west, are a pretext for Russia to annex Ukrainian territory. Putin promised on Wednesday that Moscow would defend its new territories with all available means, [including nuclear weapons](#).

The voting began on Friday and is due to continue until Tuesday in the Russia-controlled parts of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk regions. In some places, election officials set up mobile polling stations in courtyards, citing security concerns, and there were numerous videos showing people filling in ballots under the watchful eye of police.

There is little doubt that the Kremlin will announce an overwhelming decision to join Russia, but Ukrainian officials have said Russia declaring an annexation will not stop Kyiv's attempts to win back the territories.

	“Half of the population fled the Donetsk region because of Russian terror and constant shelling, voting against Russia with their feet, and the second half has been cheated and scared,” said the governor of Donetsk region, Pavlo Kyrylenko.
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HEADLINE	09/24 Zimbabwe measles outbreak kills 700 kids
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/24/health/measles-outbreak-zimbabwe.html
GIST	<p>BULAWAYO, Zimbabwe — A measles outbreak has killed more than 700 children and infected thousands of others across Zimbabwe, highlighting the risks of faltering childhood immunization campaigns around the globe.</p> <p>As of Sept. 6, the country’s Ministry of Health and Child Care was reporting more than 6,500 cases and 704 deaths. It has not released numbers since then.</p> <p>The outbreak is the result of a grim confluence of factors endangering child health in many countries.</p> <p>Routine immunization dropped significantly in Zimbabwe during the Covid-19 pandemic. Anxious parents stayed away from health centers; health care workers were reassigned from routine vaccination programs to the Covid-19 pandemic response; and school closures and lengthy lockdowns scuppered the usual outreach campaigns.</p> <p>In July, the World Health Organization and UNICEF warned that millions of children, most of them in the poorest countries, had missed some or all of their childhood vaccinations because of Covid lockdowns, armed conflicts and other obstacles. The U.N. agencies called the situation the largest backslide in routine immunization in 30 years and warned that, combined with rapidly rising rates of malnutrition, it created conditions that could threaten the lives of millions of children.</p> <p>Vaccination coverage was already flagging in Zimbabwe before the pandemic, declining each year since 2017, because a decades-long political and economic crisis has gutted the public health system.</p> <p>Zimbabwe’s health system is desperately short-staffed. Health care workers have moved to neighboring South Africa or high-income countries for jobs where they will earn much higher salaries than the meager wages in Zimbabwe that often don’t arrive at all.</p> <p>Twenty-five years ago, Zimbabwe had one of the highest rates of vaccination coverage in sub-Saharan Africa, but vaccine hesitancy has swelled, amplified by influential churches that discourage immunization and urge members to rely on prayer and the intercession of pastors instead. The Johane Marange Apostolic Church, which has hundreds of thousands of members, is at the center of the measles outbreak.</p> <p>Some Apostolic and evangelical pastors have long opposed vaccination, saying their prayers and sacred stones are enough to protect the faithful, and have threatened to expel women who take children to clinics. This rhetoric, fueled by social media, ramped up in opposition to Covid-19 shots, which some evangelical leaders warned would contain “the mark of the beast.” The hesitancy has spilled over into resistance to routine childhood shots.</p> <p>A spokesman for the federal health ministry said it was making clergy a focus of the government’s renewed efforts to get young children vaccinated.</p> <p>“Government has embarked on a mass vaccination campaign reaching out to faith leaders to garner support and awareness,” Donald Mujiri, the spokesman, said. “Children aged between 6 months and 15 years are the most affected, especially in those religious sects who do not believe in vaccination. The ministry remains committed that no child should die of measles.”</p>

The first measles cases in this outbreak were reported in April in the village of Makabvepi near the border with Mozambique. While district health officers were alerted to the presence of measles, the first children to die were buried quickly and their deaths were not reported, said Dr. Cephas Fonte, the medical officer for Mutasa District. The children who died came from families that belonged to the Johane Marange Apostolic Church; after the group held a large Easter service, and then a Passover celebration in July that drew worshipers from across the country, measles spread across Zimbabwe.

The group publicly opposes vaccination. It represents a powerful voting bloc and is closely aligned with President Emmerson Mnangagwa, who attended the Passover gathering.

The Ministry of Health and Child Care recognized by late 2020 that Covid had derailed vaccination campaigns, but a catch-up measles campaign targeting children from infancy to age 5 began only last month, as the reported death toll began to climb. Major international health agencies are supporting that campaign, but would not speak to The New York Times on the record because the subject is perceived as politically sensitive.

Monica Mutsvangwa, Zimbabwe's information minister, said that she believed most evangelical families wanted to have their children vaccinated.

"Contrary to the usual resistance, the Apostolic Church worshipers in Manicaland have come out in their numbers for measles vaccination," she said. "The process was, however, slow at first. And there are still some religious groups that continue to resist. A lot of advocacy and work with leaders of these groups is ongoing."

Zimbabwean children are more susceptible to acute illness from measles because many are malnourished. Per capita income has dropped in each of the last four years, while food prices have surged because of numerous factors, including grain shortages caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and drought and higher temperatures related to climate change.

Zimbabwe last had a severe measles outbreak in 2009, at the peak of a hyperinflation crisis. There were more than 8,000 cases, and at least 500 children died. The cash-starved health system has struggled since then to boost vaccination coverage.

A typhoid outbreak last year led to a 10-day campaign in which three million children were immunized against typhoid and polio and given vitamin A, which reduces the severity of measles, but they were not vaccinated against the measles virus.

Viola Mombeyarara's 20-month-old daughter, Anenyasha, died on Sept. 4. Measles struck each of her three older children, and they recovered, but vomiting, diarrhea and fever left the baby fatally dehydrated.

Anenyasha was diagnosed with measles by a nurse at a clinic near her family's home in Muzarabani in the north of the country, but her mother, a farmer who is a member of the Johane Marange church, believes there were other causes of her death.

"We could see she was getting better when I brought her home, but witchcraft was used against us," Ms. Mombeyarara said. "Why did she die, when the others overcame measles? This is the work of evil."

She said she was still hesitant about vaccinating her other children.

"I don't know — the herbs we used cured the other children, so they work," she said, adding: "I still believe in our way. We can't vaccinate."

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HEADLINE	09/24 Iran protests surge to dozens of cities
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/24/world/middleeast/iran-protests.html

GIST

The largest anti-government protests in Iran since 2009 gathered strength on Saturday, spreading to as many as 80 cities, even as the authorities escalated a crackdown that has reportedly killed at least 50 people and brought the arrests of dozens of prominent activists and journalists, according to rights groups and news media reports.

Internet access — especially on cellphone apps widely used for communication — continued to be disrupted or fully blocked, affecting Iranians' ability to communicate with one another and the outside world. News from Iran has trickled out with many hours of delay.

While the 2009 protests erupted over an election widely condemned as fraudulent, the current demonstrations seemed focused on the Iranian security forces, with reports of vicious beatings of security officers and firebombings of the local headquarters of the notorious morality police.

In many cities, including Tehran, the capital, security forces responded by [opening fire](#) on the crowds. On Boulevard Ferdous and at the Shahrak Ekbatan apartment complex in Tehran, officers fired at windows; in the city of Rasht, they threw tear gas into apartments, according to witnesses and videos on social media.

Iranian state media said Friday that at least 35 people had been killed in the unrest, but human rights groups said on Saturday that the number is likely to be much higher. A previous death toll of 17 issued by the state news media included at least five members of the security services.

The videos posted online and the scale of the response from the authorities are difficult to independently verify, but video and photographs sent by witnesses known to The New York Times were broadly in line with the images being posted widely online.

Deep resentments and anger have been building for months, analysts say, particularly among young Iranians, in response to a crackdown ordered by the country's hard-line president, Ebrahim Raisi, that has targeted women.

That comes on top of a litany of complaints over the years over corruption, mismanagement of the economy, inept handling of Covid and widespread political repression. The problems have persisted under Mr. Raisi, who came to power in an election in which any potential contenders were eliminated before the vote, particularly those from the reformist faction.

During the tenure of Mr. Raisi's predecessor, the moderate Hassan Rouhani, the morality police had been discouraged from enforcing Iran's often draconian laws against women, particularly the requirement that they wear the hijab in public in the "proper" fashion. But Iran's powerful supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who is now said to be [resting in bed after emergency surgery](#), engineered the ascent of Mr. Raisi, eliminating an important outlet for the frustrations of Iran's younger generation.

Those frustrations are now boiling over. The small Kurdish city of Oshnavieh reportedly [fell to protesters](#) when local security forces retreated after days of intense fighting, the editor of a Kurdish news site said.

"Since last night, Oshnavieh has been governed by the people," a Kurdish official, Hussein Yazdanpana, said in an interview, adding that women had thrown off their mandatory head scarves in celebration.

"The liberation has far-reaching consequences for other cities," he said, describing the town as a gateway to other Kurdish areas of Iran.

Ammar Golie, an Iranian Kurd based in Germany who edits the news site NNS Roj, has been in regular contact with residents of [Oshnavieh](#), which is in West Azerbaijan Province and has a population of 40,000 ethnic Kurds. He said the residents had set up roadblocks at the gateway to the city's only two roads.

Videos posted on social media show [large crowds](#) marching in the streets of Oshnavieh, many wearing traditional Kurdish garb, and chanting, “Freedom.” Another [video](#) shows intense gunfights over control of the city’s Police Headquarters.

Mr. Golie said local contacts had told him that an army battalion and a unit of the Revolutionary Guards Corps from the nearest city, Oroumīyeh, had been deployed to crush the protests and take Oshnavieh back. “We are expecting blood to be spilled,” Mr. Golie said. “It’s an extremely tense situation.”

The nationwide uprising was ignited by the death of a 22-year-old woman, [Mahsa Amini](#), in the custody of the morality police on Sept. 16. Ms. Amini was arrested on accusations of violating the hijab mandate. [Women](#) have led the past week’s demonstrations, some ripping off their head scarves, waving them and burning them as men have cheered them on.

For seven days and nights, Iranians have taken to the streets, facing bullets, [tear gas](#), beatings and arrests to send a message to the clerics who have led the nation for 43 years. They have chanted for an end to the Islamic Republic’s rule, according to witnesses and videos shared on social media.

In Tehran, protests have changed shape from large gatherings at designated landmarks to smaller cells spread in most neighborhoods — including the affluent northern section and the working-class southern parts.

In the religious city of Qum, the power center of the Shiite faith and the government’s power base, videos posted on social media show scenes never seen before: young women stripping off their hijabs and crowds chanting against Ayatollah Khamenei, and calling him the nation’s “shame.”

President Raisi, upon returning to Iran from New York, where he addressed the United Nations General Assembly, warned on Friday in a speech at Tehran’s airport that the government would “not allow, under any circumstances, for the security of the country and public to be jeopardized.”

The Ministry of Intelligence sent a text message to all cellphone users warning that anyone participating in the demonstrations, which it said were organized by Iran’s enemies, would be punished according to Shariah law. Copies of the texts were shared with The New York Times and also posted on social media.

The Committee to Protect Journalists said [that at least 11 journalists](#), including Niloofar Hamedī, the reporter from the daily newspaper Shargh who was the first to report on Ms. Amini’s case and interviewed her family in the hospital, had been arrested.

Among the activists arrested were Majid Tavakoli and the sociologist Mohammadreza Jalaeipour, the organization said.

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HEADLINE	09/24 Armenia, Azerbaijan underlying tensions
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/article/armenia-azerbaijan-clashes.html
GIST	<p>Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken met the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan in New York this week for the first direct talks since more than 180 people were reported killed last week in fighting between the two countries.</p> <p>The flare-up subsided within days, but the high-level meeting reflects worries that the causes of the conflict — and the full-scale war that preceded it in 2020 — are nowhere near resolved.</p> <p>Those worries are aggravated by the underlying geopolitical tensions. Russia is a longtime protector of Armenia. Turkey, a NATO member, is a key ally for Azerbaijan, and backed it in the 2020 war. And although U.S. diplomats have sought to maintain a mediating role, Speaker Nancy Pelosi stepped into the middle of the fray last weekend, visiting Armenia to show support and declaring that the recent violence “was initiated by the Azeris.”</p>

The trip was widely seen as a political move by Ms. Pelosi ahead of the midterm elections in November. She was accompanied by Representatives Jackie Speier and Anna G. Eshoo, both Armenian Americans from her home state of California, where there is a large Armenian community.

Here's a guide to what happened in the most recent clashes, what lies behind them, and the potential stakes of the dispute.

The conflict centers on a region disputed for decades.

The mountainous region of Nagorno-Karabakh has long been at the heart of tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, but with a majority ethnic Armenian population, it declared independence in the late Soviet period.

A yearslong war between Armenia and Azerbaijan followed, killing tens of thousands of people and leaving hundreds of thousands displaced. It ended in a 1994 cease-fire that left Armenia in control of Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding districts that were legally part of Azerbaijan. During the war in 2020, Azerbaijan — with powerful Turkish backing including attack drones — recaptured much of Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding districts. The death toll was in the thousands, and tens of thousands of people were forced to flee.

A cease-fire brokered by Russia left Azerbaijan holding most of the territory, with Armenian forces pulling back and heavily armed Russian peacekeepers moving in.

Now, analysts say, Azerbaijan is pushing to have Armenia recognize Azerbaijani sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh, and to make other concessions.

But the latest flare-up was elsewhere.

Each side has a different story about how the fighting started last week.

Armenia said that Azerbaijan attacked and that 105 of its service members were killed and six civilians wounded. Azerbaijan said its military actions were “retaliatory measures” in response to provocation from Armenia, and it reported 71 of its service members were killed.

Although tensions between the two countries spring from who controls Nagorno-Karabakh, fighting this time took place directly between Armenia and Azerbaijan, where the border remains undemarcated.

Other details about the latest conflict remain disputed. The United Nations said that heavy fighting involving artillery and drones had been reported along the international border between the two nations on Sept. 12.

Azerbaijan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spoke of “an incident” on “the deemed border,” but Armenia said Azerbaijan had attacked three towns in Armenia itself: Jermuk, Goris and Kapan.

Several analysts also pointed to fighting inside Armenia. “This was an Azerbaijani attack in Armenia proper,” said Thomas de Waal, a senior fellow at Carnegie Europe and the author of a book about Nagorno-Karabakh. The International Crisis Group, a research institute, said troops from Azerbaijan had entered Armenia.

Several Biden administration officials declined to discuss the issue of whether Azerbaijani soldiers had entered Armenia, although the U.S. State Department spokesman, Ned Price, said early on that the United States had seen “significant evidence of Azerbaijani shelling inside Armenia and significant damage to Armenian infrastructure.”

On Monday, Armenia's foreign minister, Ararat Mirzoyan, said that forces from Azerbaijan were still inside Armenian territory and should withdraw.

The exact location matters, not least because Armenia is part of a mutual defense alliance led by Russia which, like NATO's founding treaty, declares an attack on one member to be an attack on all. Many analysts suggested that Azerbaijan had been seeking to capitalize on Moscow's preoccupation with Ukraine after recent setbacks in the war there, and they noted a lack of military support for Armenia emanating from the Kremlin.

Azerbaijan is pressing its demands. Armenia looks to be playing for time.

One problem is that peace talks after the 2020 war have not yet yielded a resolution.

Armenia's prime minister, Nikol Pashinyan, has said he intends to come to terms, but his domestic opponents have denounced the sort of deal that would be on the table as treasonous. He already faced angry protests after the 2020 cease-fire.

Analysts said that Azerbaijan's government had three demands: a renunciation by Armenia of its claims in Nagorno-Karabakh, the demarcation of the international border on its terms and security control of a yet-to-be-built road and rail corridor to Nakhchivan, an island of Azerbaijani territory inside Armenia. That would also connect Azerbaijan with Turkey.

Paul Stronski, a senior fellow at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, said that Azerbaijan's military action amounted to probing that aimed to alter the facts on the ground where possible and to press Armenia to negotiate a treaty on its terms.

For Russia and Turkey, it's a delicate situation.

Russia has laid claim to two roles in this dispute, brokering cease-fire deals while also guaranteeing Armenia's security. The first role has so far helped it avoid the full potential costs of the second.

Mr. Pashinyan spoke by phone with President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia when fighting reignited last week, and the Kremlin brokered a rapid cease-fire, calling on the two sides to respect the 2020 agreement. But that initial cease-fire did not hold — leading the United States to use its influence with both sides to halt fighting. And Mr. Putin did not offer military aid.

Moscow's ability to project strength in the South Caucasus, for example by supplying arms or providing other military support to Armenia, is constrained by its war in Ukraine, according to Arkady Dubnov, a Russian expert on the country's ties with former Soviet republics.

But Moscow may also find its double role in the South Caucasus harder to maintain if the situation grows more dangerous. In 2020, Mr. Stronski said, the line between the two forces was in territory occupied by Armenia inside Azerbaijan. Now, "the Armenian and Azerbaijani militaries are pretty much facing each other on the still undemarcated state border between the two countries."

Turkey says it will stand by its ally Azerbaijan, and Azerbaijan's gains in 2020 reflected more extensive Turkish backing than in previous confrontations, part of [a turn to a more assertive foreign policy](#) by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

At the same time, Turkey's economy is in crisis, and it has made overtures to Russia in the past over security, [including the purchase of a missile system](#).

Global powers are calling for peace. But some also need natural gas.

Mr. Blinken this week urged the two sides to return to negotiations and [prevent further hostilities](#). This is in line with the stance of the Minsk Group of states, the United States, Russia and France, which have been cautious in assigning blame, according to Mr. Stronski. More broadly, Washington has long sought influence in the South Caucasus and other states in the former Soviet empire.

The European Union, meanwhile, has redoubled efforts for a peace deal since the 2020 war: The leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan held peace talks in Brussels in late August under the auspices of a top E.U. official, Charles Michel.

But Europe's position is now complicated by its search for additional natural gas supplies to make up for the loss of Russian imports given the war in Ukraine. In mid-July, the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, visited Azerbaijan to sign an agreement with Azerbaijan's president, Ilham Aliyev. During the visit, she said Azerbaijan was a "[reliable, trustworthy](#)" partner.

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HEADLINE	09/24 Canada hoax to silence anti-govt protest?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/24/world/canada/freedom-convoy-coutts-alberta.html
GIST	<p>COUTTS, Alberta — The village's only restaurant offers smiles and two pamphlets, one denouncing Covid-19 vaccines for children, the other saying the United Nations' mission includes creating a "microchipped society" for "tracking and controlling."</p> <p>So pervasive is the belief here that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is a dictator-in-the-making that even a top official in the village admits she "may have" a flag telling Canada's leader where to go — rudely.</p> <p>And many residents of the village, Coutts, Alberta, think the biggest event that occurred here in recent memory — when the police raided a local home in February and revealed a frightening cache of weapons — was a hoax perpetrated by the police to silence an antigovernment protest.</p> <p>"It may have been a conspiracy," said Bill Emerson, who for four decades has lived across the street from the home the police raided. The weapons gave the government a pretext for suspending civil liberties, he said. "Maybe somebody planted the guns."</p> <p>The police raid came during the time of Canada's Freedom Convoy, which began as a movement by truckers to challenge a government vaccination mandate but spread to include a wide array of antigovernment grievances.</p> <p>Seven months after the police made the dramatic weapons seizure in Coutts, and after the protesters who had been dug into the village for 17 days reluctantly pulled away in their trucks and tractors, the Freedom Convoy is still here — in spirit and philosophy.</p> <p>The stark contrast between the mainstream account of what happened — the police disarming a small group of protesters with violent intentions — and the conspiracy-fueled one — a government attempt to demonize the protesters — reflects a burgeoning polarization of Canadian society and a deepening of far-right ideology and misinformation.</p> <p>Both trends were supercharged by the coronavirus, but neither has weakened as the pandemic subsides.</p> <p>The Freedom Convoy movement — that aimed at one point to replace the federal government with a ruling committee including protesters, and which Mr. Trudeau dismissed as a "fringe minority" with "unacceptable views" — is hardly a fringe. Months later, it garners the support of one in four Canadians, according to a recent poll, and some of its beliefs have entered mainstream politics.</p> <p>"We have crossed a Rubicon, and there ain't no going back," said Evan Balgord, executive director of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network. "Canada hasn't faced something like this, especially not in a long time. How do we deal with a movement that wants to dismantle democracy?"</p> <p>Coutts is a small border village 185 miles southeast of Calgary, cut into rolling fields of wheat, barley and canola that glows fluorescent yellow in the summer.</p> <p>Modest bungalows, a handful of businesses and a large Mormon temple dot its dozen streets.</p>

Before last winter, the village's faint claim to fame was [a mention by President Obama](#) of its baseball fields, which nose right up against the international border. "If you hit a home run," he said, "there's a good chance the ball will land in Sweetgrass, Montana."

Then, one frigid day last winter, hundreds of tractor-trailers and trucks rumbled down the highway to the village's edge and stopped, blocking all lanes leading to the normally busy border crossing.

They were a splinter group of the Freedom Convoy, [a raucous rally that occupied the country's capital](#), Ottawa, for three weeks.

Many of the movement's organizers came from Alberta, home to Canada's oil patch and Conservative populism, where the themes of freedom and government distrust are well-worn.

In Coutts, the village's only bar, shuttered by the pandemic, was reopened to be their headquarters.

All the while, scores of provincial police, members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, kept watch. Over 17 days, 552 officers were assigned to the village of just 224, according to the mayor.

On the fourteenth evening of protest, when a local church was holding a Sunday service in the bar, the police arrived in full military gear, wielding automatic weapons, and arrested two men in the crowd.

Later that night, they executed a search warrant on a house, where a local woman was hosting many protesters.

Over a few hours, the police arrested 14 people. Most were charged with mischief over 5,000 Canadian dollars, or about \$3,700, and possession of a weapon for a dangerous purpose. But four men face a far more serious charge — conspiracy to commit murder, which carries a potential life-in-prison sentence.

Undercover officers witnessed the set up of what they believed to be a delivery of guns to Coutts, search warrants reveal. Police said the group was preparing for an armed standoff with the police. "It could have been deadly for citizens, protesters and officers," said Alberta Royal Canadian Mounted Police Deputy Commissioner Curtis Zablocki.

A photo of the cache of weapons they seized included rifles, handguns, high capacity magazines, ammunition and bullet proof vests.

All four of the men charged with conspiracy to commit murder are middle-aged, blue collar workers from Southern Alberta.

A day before the police raid, one of them, Jerry Morin, recorded a video on Facebook, calling his friends to Coutts to help "hold the line."

"There's no excuses," said Mr. Morin, a 40-year-old who installs and repairs electrical lines. "This is war."

His older sister, Tina Shipley, said he had attended anti-mask rallies in the early days of the pandemic with his common-law wife, who faces lesser charges connected to the protest.

"They saw this as a violation of their freedoms and rights," said Ms. Shipley, adding they sincerely believed the pandemic was a government hoax.

"He thinks he is fighting for your rights," she said.

After the arrests, it took less than a day for new conspiracy theories to start circulating, according to Coutts's weary mayor Jim Willett.

Some believed the radical protesters themselves were planted by the police, or the government. “Maybe they were paid to come and cause a problem,” said Beth McCoy, a retired customs broker, who sat in her yard this summer, sorting through children’s Valentines sent to protesters. “Are they really in jail?”

“There’s a distrust amongst a lot of people- — a far-right belief that police and government are not to be trusted,” said Mr. Willett, 74, who knows only four villagers who have been vaccinated against Covid-19, including himself.

A particular dislike for the federal Liberal Party and the Trudeau family has been ingrained in Alberta’s political culture since the 1980s, when then Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau — Justin Trudeau’s father — introduced a short-lived national energy program that shared the region’s oil profits with the rest of Canada.

“Trudeau hates us,” said Lori Rolfe, Coutts’s chief administrative officer.

But the distrust and conspiracy theories that have taken root in Coutts reflect a wider polarization of Canadian society.

The 25 percent of Canadians who support the Freedom Convoy tend to be rural males, who lack university education, and identify as working class or poor, said Frank Graves, president of the respected polling firm Ekos Research Associates. They consume [a lot of disinformation](#) and disagree with the Trudeau government’s stance on climate change, immigration and reconciliation with Indigenous people, his firm’s polls show.

And they have found a champion in the new leader of the Conservative Party, Pierre Poilievre, who [pledged](#) to make Canadians “the freest people on earth,” echoing the language of the protests.

The men charged with conspiracy to commit murder remain in jail. Their trial is set for next June.

Many Freedom Convoy supporters consider them fall guys.

Some said they believed no guns were found in Coutts at all, that the police had used a photo from another raid to sway public opinion against protesters and to justify the steps Mr. Trudeau took to end the protest. The day of the raid, his government [passed a sweeping emergency bill](#), granting police wide powers to arrest protesters, and instructing banks to freeze accounts linked to the convoy.

Federal Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino [pointed to Coutts as part of the justification](#).

“We’re talking about a group that is organized, agile, knowledgeable and driven by an extremist ideology where might makes right,” he told reporters.

“It was to manipulate the public to believe this,” said Sandra Burrows, another protest supporter from Coutts. “It brought an end to a peaceful rally, by planting the weapons.”

Marco Van Huigenbos, the main leader of the Coutts protest, is so convinced that at least two of the four men are not guilty, he is subsidizing their families with 10,000 Canadian dollars a month. The money is from leftover funds raised in Coutts — both from GoFundMe, and from a donation box.

“They are using these guys to send a message,” said Mr. Huigenbos, a town councilor and business owner from nearby Fort Macleod, who himself was [recently charged with mischief over 5,000 Canadian dollars](#). “There is political influence here.”

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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/09/24/world/russia-ukraine-putin-news#russias-draft-raises-the-prospect-of-pitting-ukrainians-against-ukrainians-in-the-war
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — Russia’s first wartime draft since World War II has extended to some residents of occupied territory in Ukraine, officials in Kyiv said Saturday, raising the prospect of Russia soon forcing Ukrainians to fight other Ukrainians in the war.</p> <p>As Russia stage manages referendums in four Ukrainian provinces that it partly occupies — widely seen as a prelude to annexation of those territories — draft notices have gone out to men in occupied areas who had already agreed to accept Russian citizenship in the six months since Russia invaded, according to the Ukrainian military command and Mykhailo Podolyak, a senior adviser to President Volodymyr Zelensky.</p> <p>On Twitter, Mr. Podolyak wrote that Russia “forcibly conscripts occupied territories’ residents and collaborators,” saying that it was “hard to imagine a bigger anti-publicity” for other Ukrainians to support the Russian cause.</p> <p>The Russian military also has been disproportionately conscripting Crimean Tatars, an ethnic minority on the Crimean Peninsula, Ukrainska Pravda newspaper reported. Crimea, a key staging ground for Russia’s invasion, has been under Kremlin control since Moscow illegally annexed the peninsula in 2014. Tatars had been among the most vocal opponents of the Russian takeover of the peninsula.</p> <p>A rights group focused on the Tatar community, Krym SOS, reported that “people are taken directly from their homes to recruiting offices” and that Tatar men oppose the draft.</p> <p>“Nobody wants to take part in a war against their own country, to go and kill Ukrainians,” the rights group said in a statement. Conscripting residents of occupied territory to fight in an enemy army violates the Geneva Convention.</p> <p>Russia could wind up with an army of rebellious soldiers, Mr. Zelensky said in his nightly address on Friday. He urged those living in regions under Russian control to avoid mobilization “by any means,” including by trying to escape to government-controlled land. If they cannot, and end up in the Russian military, Mr. Zelensky asked that they assist Ukraine’s fight from the inside.</p> <p>“Sabotage any activity of the enemy, hinder any Russian operations, provide us with any important information about the occupiers,” Mr. Zelensky said. “And at the first opportunity, switch to our positions.”</p>
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HEADLINE	09/24 Russian men flee to Georgia amid call-up
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/09/24/world/russia-ukraine-putin-news#the-line-at-georgias-border-with-russia-is-2000-cars-long
GIST	<p>SHEKVETILI, Georgia — Hundreds of vehicles are clogging highways to border crossings between Russia and neighboring countries after President Vladimir V. Putin’s announcement of a call-up of troops, with the line into Georgia growing to over eight miles long in the past several days.</p> <p>Since Mr. Putin’s announcement on Wednesday, some Russian men who had once thought they were safe from the front lines in Ukraine have fled the country. And they have done so in a rush, lining up at the borders and paying rising prices to catch flights to countries that allow them to enter without visas.</p> <p>By Saturday afternoon, the line at the Russian border with Georgia had grown so long — 2,300 cars, up from 50 before Mr. Putin announced the call-up, according to Russian data — that the local police urged people in a statement to refrain from crossing the border.</p> <p>The queue was more than eight miles long, according to Yandex, a Russian internet company that runs a popular map and traffic service. Smaller lines were also recorded by the Russian Federal Customs Agency at other crossing points, including with Latvia and Mongolia.</p>

The crossing point usually processes up to 2,000 cars a day, meaning that people may have to wait for at least 24 hours to cross the border. Many European countries have tightened entry restrictions for Russians. Georgia, which does not require Russians to have a visa to enter the country, appeared to be one of the few remaining destinations for those fleeing possible conscription.

In some Russian regions, military authorities banned reservists from leaving their districts and towns, but it was not clear how those bans would be enforced. No ban on travel has been imposed in Moscow and some other urbanized regions.

Russian news media described anxious scenes as people in line at the border with Georgia worried about whether they would be let out of the country, though there were few reports of people being turned away.

This month, the three Baltic States agreed to ban Russians from crossing into their countries by land, sealing a popular route out of the country. Finland, where the number of people crossing the border on Friday doubled from a week earlier to nearly 8,000, said it would deny entry to Russian tourists some time in the coming week.

Russians can stay in Georgia — which fought its own five-day war with Russia in 2008 and considers 20 percent of its territory occupied by the northern neighbor — for up to one year without a visa.

In the months since Putin invaded Ukraine, thousands of Russians have settled in Georgia. In August, Transparency International Georgia said that Russians ran 13,500 companies in the country, half of them opened since the invasion, and had transferred more than \$650 million into Georgia from April to June.

Georgian opposition parties have called on the government to restrict the number of Russians entering the country, citing security concerns. The ruling party has responded that the opposition is proposing “xenophobic policies” to pursue their political goals.

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HEADLINE	09/23 US: Putin more involved in war strategy
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/23/us/politics/putin-ukraine.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia has thrust himself more directly into strategic planning for the war in Ukraine in recent weeks, American officials said, including rejecting requests from his commanders on the ground that they be allowed to retreat from the vital southern city of Kherson.</p> <p>A withdrawal from Kherson would allow the Russian military to pull back across the Dnipro River in an orderly way, preserving its equipment and saving the lives of soldiers.</p> <p>But such a retreat would be another humiliating public acknowledgment of Mr. Putin’s failure in the war, and would hand a second major victory to Ukraine in one month. Kherson was the first major city to fall to the Russians in the initial invasion, and remains the only regional capital under Moscow’s control. Retaking it would be a major accomplishment for President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine.</p> <p>Focused on victory at all costs, Mr. Putin has become a more public face of the war as the Russian military appears increasingly in turmoil, forcing him to announce a call-up this week that could sweep 300,000 Russian civilians into military service. This month, Moscow has demonstrated it has too few troops to continue its offensive, suffers from shortages of high-tech precision weaponry and has been unable to gain dominance of Ukraine’s skies.</p> <p>But American officials briefed on highly sensitive intelligence said that behind the scenes Mr. Putin is taking on an even deeper role in the war, including telling commanders that strategic decisions in the field are his to make. Although Mr. Putin has accepted some recommendations from military commanders, including the mobilization of civilians, his involvement has created tensions, American officials said.</p>

The officials said that Mr. Putin's rejection of a military pullback from Kherson has also led to a decrease in morale among Russian troops who have been mostly cut off from their supply lines, and who appear to believe they could be left stranded against Ukrainian forces.

"The situation in Ukraine is clearly dynamic," Gen. Mark A. Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in an interview on Friday. "It's too early for a full assessment, but it is clear to me that the strategic initiative has shifted to the Ukrainians." But he cautioned that there remains a "long road ahead."

Mr. Putin's disagreements over battle lines in Kherson illustrate how critical the war in Ukraine's south is to both sides, American officials said. Despite Ukraine's recent advances in the northeast, the area around Kherson is a critical theater in the war, with profound strategic implications for Kyiv and Moscow.

Some American officials said they saw trouble ahead for the Russian military in the southern theater. A senior U.S. official said this week that Ukraine was well on its way to repeating in the south the gains its forces had managed during a lightning offensive in the northeast earlier this month. If Ukraine pushes Russian forces back farther, Mr. Putin's hard-fought-for land bridge to Crimea, the territory it captured from Ukraine and annexed in 2014, could eventually be threatened, American officials said.

The divisions over Kherson are only the latest disagreements between Mr. Putin and his top commanders. Senior Russian officers repeatedly questioned the early plans for the war, American officials said, particularly an initial stage that envisioned a quick strike on Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital. The Russian officers believed Mr. Putin was going to war with insufficient troops and weaponry, American officials said.

The Russian officers' concerns proved correct, and after the defeat of the Russian army outside Kyiv, Mr. Putin eased up his control of military planning. He allowed senior generals to create a new strategy focused on massive artillery barrages, American officials said. The new strategy was effectively a grinding war of attrition that played to the Russian military's strength and succeeded in pushing the army forward in eastern Ukraine.

Since Mr. Putin ordered his commanders to continue fighting in Kherson, the Russian military has tried to halt the Ukrainian advance there. Last week the Russians blew up a dam on the Inhulets River to make the current counteroffensive more difficult.

But Ukrainian strikes have blown up the crossings over the Dnipro River, which has largely cut off Russian troops from their supply lines on the other side. Russians have had to use pontoon bridges to cross the river, only to see them hit by Ukrainian fire, Ukrainian officials said. "They've got units in there who, if the Ukrainians break through the lines, will be cut off and surrounded," said Seth G. Jones, senior vice president at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "I cannot overstate how dicey the situation is for them."

Pulling back past the Dnipro River would likely allow Russian commanders to hold the line in the south with fewer troops. That would give them more latitude to redeploy forces from Kherson to other areas, either pushing back against the Kharkiv counteroffensive in the northeast, solidifying defensive lines in the eastern Donbas region or opening up a new front in the south.

But Mr. Putin has told commanders he will set the strategy.

"In this war there has been a consistent mismatch between Putin's political objectives and the military means to attain them," said Michael Kofman, director of Russia studies at CNA, a defense research institute in Arlington, Va. "At important decision points Putin has procrastinated, refusing to recognize the reality, until the options turned from bad to worse."

Pulling Russian forces back past the Dnipro River would also be a stark rebuttal to Mr. Putin's referendum there on joining the Russian Federation. Holding such sham votes is a key objective of Moscow. Blocking them remains one of Kyiv's top priorities.

With dissent rising in Russia, and military-age men attempting to flee the country to avoid the call-up, U.S. officials say Mr. Putin believes another Ukrainian victory would further erode the popularity of the war, something he cannot risk. Videos widely shared on Twitter in the days since Mr. Putin announced his call-up show angry draftees being scolded by shouting Russian military officials. “Playtime’s over!” yells one military official in one video. “You’re soldiers now!”

Mr. Putin’s conversations with his regional military commanders in Ukraine may also be part of an effort to get more accurate assessments of the campaign. As the war has gone on, American officials have said that Mr. Putin has not been given accurate information from his top military advisers, Sergei K. Shoigu, the defense minister, and Valery Gerasimov, the Russian military’s chief of the general staff.

In addition to blocking a retreat from Kherson, Mr. Putin has raised doubts about Russian efforts to consolidate their position in the northeast near the Oskil River, which the Ukrainian counteroffensive reached this month. Mr. Putin, an American official said, has opposed pulling back there as well, because he is reluctant to hand anything to Mr. Zelensky that looks like a win.

Even as Mr. Putin demands a strategy of no further retreats, American officials said Russian officers themselves are divided on how to respond to the Ukrainian counteroffensives. Some officers believe they should push back hard on Mr. Putin’s directives before the Ukrainians break through their current lines. Others believe they can follow through on Mr. Putin’s directives.

Russia has continued to focus on the south, despite Ukrainian progress east of Kharkiv. While Moscow has sent some reinforcements to embattled northeastern positions, most of the tens of thousands of troops that Russia sent south to the Kherson area — including some of its best combat forces — remain in place.

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HEADLINE	09/24 Ukraine south: fierce fighting, deadly costs
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/24/world/europe/ukraine-south-kherson-russia.html
GIST	<p>AT THE KHERSON FRONT, Ukraine — The commander banged on the door furiously.</p> <p>“I need help!” he shouted.</p> <p>When Tetiana Kozyr opened up, the commander rushed in, carrying a young soldier on his shoulders. She said the young man was sunburned, thin and gravely wounded.</p> <p>The Ukrainians were trying to recapture her village, the smallest dot on the most detailed military maps. Russian forces had just blown up three Ukrainian tanks. Flames leaped off the roofs of neighboring houses.</p> <p>The commander laid the young man gently down on Ms. Kozyr’s kitchen floor and then ripped open a bandage pack and thrust it against his chest and neck, which were badly bleeding. Ms. Kozyr hovered over them, feeling helpless and terrified in her own kitchen, watching the commander try to save the young man’s life.</p> <p>“He looked so scared,” said Ms. Kozyr, who lived on a small farm and recounted this scene, which was corroborated by others from her village. “I had to turn away.”</p> <p>Outside her house, several other Ukrainian soldiers lay face down in the grass.</p> <p>Ukraine’s southern offensive was the most highly anticipated military action of the summer. Forecast by Ukrainian officials for weeks, its goal was to push the Russians back from a strategic region along the coast, bolster the confidence of a battered citizenry and prove to allies that Ukraine could make good use of Western-supplied weapons.</p>

That push forward has continued, even as Ukraine has made a more dramatic surge this month in the northeast, routing Russian forces. Ukraine is regaining territory in the south, though slowly, and President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia is concerned enough about suffering an embarrassing setback that he has refused to let his commanders retreat from the city of Kherson, according to American officials.

But overall, the south remains a different story from the northeast. Interviews with dozens of commanders, ordinary soldiers, medics, village leaders and civilians who recently escaped the conflict zone portray a more difficult and costly campaign: The fighting is grinding, grueling and steep in casualties, perhaps the most heartbreaking battle in Ukraine right now.

Russian forces are deeply dug in here, and this weekend, the Kremlin is trying to cement its gains by holding highly contentious referendums in occupied areas to annex them. Ukrainian officials say they have little choice but to attack.

They are racing to recapture territory before the October rains turn the roads here into impassable sludge. And they need to keep showing to the world, especially before a nasty winter sets in and tests their allies' resolve, that they can push the Russians out.

The Ukrainian government does not usually disclose casualty figures, but the soldiers and commanders interviewed in the past week portrayed the battlefield losses as "high" and "massive." They described large offensives in which columns of Ukrainian tanks and armored vehicles tried to cross open fields only to be pounded mercilessly by Russian artillery and blown up by Russian mines.

One Ukrainian soldier, speaking anonymously because he was not authorized to publicly discuss casualties, said that during a recent assault, "we lost 50 guys in two hours." In another place, said the soldier, who works closely with different frontline units, "hundreds" of Ukrainian troops were killed or wounded while trying to take a single village, which is still in Russian hands.

Across the occupied south — a wide crescent of fields, villages and cities along the Dnipro River and the Black Sea — the Russians have built formidable defenses: trenches zigzagging along irrigation canals; fortified bunkers; pillboxes; foxholes; even tank trenches carved out of the earth by bulldozers and covered with concrete slabs that enable the Russians to blast shells from positions that are very difficult for the Ukrainians to hit.

The Russians are determined to keep this chunk of Ukraine because it guards the Crimean Peninsula that Russia annexed in 2014. It also serves as a nexus of vital waterways and energy facilities, like the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, Europe's biggest.

Despite the high stakes, there is little face-to-face combat between the two sides, like there was in the early days of the war in the suburbs of Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital. Each Ukrainian soldier along the southern front carries an assault rifle, but few have fired their weapon.

In the south, death comes at long range. It is indiscriminate and total. When the artillery shells hit, young men press themselves to the earth, hands cupped over their ears, mouths open to let the blast wave ripple through their bodies.

"This is a different kind of war," said Iryna Vereshchagina, a volunteer doctor working near the front lines. "We're attacking the Russians but there's a big payment for this."

She said that of the hundreds of battlefield casualties she has treated, she has not seen a single gunshot wound.

"So many people are getting blown up," she said.

She looked down at her boots.

“Sometimes,” she said, “there are just pieces of people left.”

Part of the reason Ukraine is facing stiff resistance in the south is because of its highly effective information campaign about the counteroffensive. The signals it sent were so convincing that the Russians hastily redeployed tanks, artillery and thousands of troops, including some of their better trained units, from the northeast to the south.

That left the Kharkiv region wide open for the taking, which is what happened two and a half weeks ago. But it also left the south defended by tens of thousands of well-equipped Russian soldiers. And going on the attack is always more perilous than defending an entrenched position, especially when the enemy knows the other side is coming.

All of this has unsettled some Ukrainian soldiers fighting along the front line.

“The problem is that we are advancing with no artillery preparation, without suppressing their firing positions,” said Ihor Kozub, the commander of a volunteer military unit near the southern city of Mykolaiv.

He said the Ukrainian army was suffering “great losses” because “we don’t have ammunition,” and he begged for the United States to send more.

“All these heroic attacks are made with so much blood,” he said. “It’s terrible.”

A military spokeswoman defended the Ukrainian strategy.

“The enemy’s superiority in artillery does not decide the outcome,” said Nataliia Humeniuk, the head of the communications division for Ukraine’s southern command. “History knows cases of unique battles where the quality of combat was decisive. Not the number of weapons.”

She did not provide information about the number of casualties, but Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelensky, recently said that Ukraine was losing 50 soldiers a day.

The battle for the south is a lot different from Ukraine’s lightning offensive in the northeast, where the Russians troops were clearly not prepared. The Ukrainians have recaptured only a few hundred square miles in the south, less than 10 times what they recaptured in the northeast in a few days.

But Ukrainian commanders in the south always knew it was going to be a grinding battle. The strategy has been to pinch off Russian supply lines by cutting roads and destroying bridges, slowly strangling the Russians’ ability to bring in food, fuel and ammunition.

One American soldier serving with a Ukrainian unit in Mykolaiv said it was no small feat to take villages from the Russians when the Russians knew they were coming for months.

“It might look like a slog,” he said, insisting on anonymity for security reasons. “But for us, it’s progress.”

Weeks before the counteroffensive began, Ukrainian troops, including a sniper known as Pirate, started eyeing targets.

Pirate is his code name — he did not want to divulge his real name. He is 29 years old with shining blue eyes, meaty shoulders and a skull-and-crossbones patch stuck on his chest plate. For three days, he said, he lay on his stomach squinting through a scope at a squad of Russian soldiers. They were digging fortifications in a village near Kherson. Pirate and another sniper hid in a tree line almost a mile away.

At last, Pirate said, they identified the officer in charge, who was wearing a white T-shirt. Pirate and his partner calibrated their sights, gauged the wind — a soft, side wind — and counted: one, two, three. Then they squeezed their triggers.

Their two bullets flew across the open fields, outracing the speed of sound. Before he even heard the crack of the rifles, the Russian officer crumpled to the ground.

“I try not to think about who he was,” Pirate said.

He spoke from a demolished building near the front lines that has been turned into a base. This is the picture of many southern towns. They have been utterly destroyed: the schools, the homes with blown-out roofs, the power poles lying in the muddy roads, the pine trees split apart, their branches hanging down like broken arms.

Even the earth itself has been gouged by missiles and rockets, leaving moonlike craters everywhere, some with steel fins still sticking out. The smell of dried sunflowers lingers in the air. So many sunflower farms, a major industry, lie burned and deserted.

Ms. Kozyr, who had watched the wounded soldier lying on her kitchen floor, said her village had been destroyed, too. It used to be a hamlet of a few hundred people who tended small farms and raised livestock. Now no one is left. The Russians captured it in March and the Ukrainians fought hard to liberate it at the end of August, when they officially announced the beginning of the offensive. She fled a few days later and now lives in a displaced persons shelter in the city of Zaporizhzhia.

She said that when the commander first arrived with the wounded soldier, she panicked.

“I was yelling at him: ‘Why did you bring him here? The Russians will kill us all!’” she said.

But the commander just stepped through the doorway, desperate to find shelter. The village was on fire, in the middle of two armies blasting each other.

She shrunk back as her husband and the commander pressed bandages to the young man’s wounds. Shrapnel had sliced through his back and lungs. Her kitchen floor was soon covered in blood.

That night, she and her husband slept in their cellar. The commander curled up next to the wounded soldier on the kitchen floor.

When Ms. Kozyr stepped outside the next morning, to check on her calf and pigs, she passed by the kitchen and peered through the window.

The soldier’s hands were curled, his body stiff. He was dead.

She started crying at the memory of it, pulling a small rag out of her pocket and wiping her eyes. But she did not question the counteroffensive.

“It needed to be done,” she said. And then she repeated herself, a little more softly. “It needed to be done.”

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HEADLINE	09/24 Iran shells Kurds in northern Iraq
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/iran-shells-kurds-in-northern-iraq-as-unrest-mounts-at-home-11664051767?mod=lead_feature_below_a_pos1
GIST	<p>TEHRAN—Iran shelled militant opposition groups in the semiautonomous Kurdistan region of northern Iraq on Saturday, according to state media, an attack that comes during nationwide protests over the death of a young Kurdish woman in police custody.</p> <p>The Revolutionary Guard, Iran’s security force, launched the artillery attacks against “anti-Iran terrorist groups” in the Iraqi Kurdistan region Saturday, the Revolutionary Guard said in a statement carried by the state news agency, IRNA.</p>

Iran in recent years has regularly carried out such attacks targeting what it has said are Iranian Kurdish separatist groups hiding across the northwestern border in Iraq's mountainous Kurdish region. Iranian authorities said the dissidents were involved in protests that erupted in Iran's Kurdish region following the funeral of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini on Sept. 17 in her hometown in the area.

The protests have spread rapidly across the country in the midst of outrage over the death of Ms. Amini in police custody in Tehran after she allegedly violated the country's strict Islamic dress code.

As the unrest grew, Iranian security forces have cracked down on the demonstrators, [using tear gas](#) and live rounds to disperse the crowds. Some protesters have violently clashed with the security forces. Authorities have heavily disrupted access to the internet in an attempt to block the social-media networks on which the protesters have relied to express dissent and rally support.

On Saturday in Tehran, riot police were out in force in areas where protests have taken place in recent days. Their presence didn't stop motorists from sounding their horns near where the security forces were deployed to express their anger.

Several women walked past the security forces without wearing the obligatory head covering, or hijab, in apparent support of Ms. Amini. The outrage over her death highlights how restrictions on women have galvanized opposition to the ultraconservative regime.

At least 41 people have died so far during the protests, according to state media, which didn't say how many were civilians. The death toll has reached at least 30 people, the human-rights group Amnesty International said.

Some officials have blamed foreigners for what is presenting the year-old government under President Ebrahim Raisi with one of its biggest challenges.

The protests in northwestern Iran could prove especially thorny, with the death of Ms. Amini, who hailed from the largely Kurdish region, possibly becoming a rallying point for opposition to the regime.

The Kurds are one of the world's largest ethnic groups without an independent state, numbering more than 30 million people across Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran.

Iran's Kurds are largely Sunni, which has long placed them at odds with the country's ruling Shiite political establishment. They seek an end to government discrimination and neglect and more autonomy for their region, where a majority of Iran's roughly 10 million Kurds live.

Numerous armed Kurdish separatist groups operate in Iran, many of whom have moved their base to the Iraqi side of the border to shelter from Iranian attacks.

Saturday's Revolutionary Guard strikes hit three training bases and gathering points for Kurdish groups, seriously damaging the targets, the semiofficial Tasnim news agency reported. The attacks followed the movement of armed teams and a high volume of weapons, said Tasnim.

The government of Iraq and that of the Kurdistan region didn't immediately comment on the latest Iranian attack on their soil. A local Iraqi Kurdish official confirmed an Iranian artillery attack along the mountainous border.

On Saturday, scores of Iraqi Kurds demonstrated outside the United Nations office in Erbil, the region's capital, in support of the Iranian protests, according to local media.

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SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/complaints-about-russias-chaotic-mobilisation-grow-louder-2022-09-24/
GIST	<p>LONDON, Sept 24 (Reuters) - The strongly pro-Kremlin editor of Russia's state-run RT news channel expressed anger on Saturday that enlistment officers were sending call-up papers to the wrong men, as frustration about a military mobilisation grew across Russia.</p> <p>Wednesday's announcement of Russia's first public mobilisation since World War Two, to shore up its faltering invasion of Ukraine, has triggered a rush for the border by eligible men, the arrests of over 1,000 protesters, and unease in the wider population.</p> <p>Now, it is also attracting criticism from among the Kremlin's own official supporters, something almost unheard of in Russia since the invasion began seven months ago.</p> <p>"It has been announced that privates can be recruited up to the age of 35. Summonses are going to 40-year-olds," the RT editor-in-chief, Margarita Simonyan, railed on her Telegram channel.</p> <p>"They're infuriating people, as if on purpose, as if out of spite. As if they'd been sent by Kyiv."</p> <p>In another rare public sign of turmoil at the top, the defence ministry said the deputy minister in charge of logistics, four-star General Dmitry Bulgakov, had been replaced "for transfer to another role". It gave no further details.</p> <p>Russia meanwhile appears set to formally annex a swathe of Ukrainian territory next week, according to Russia's three main news agencies. This follows so-called referendums in four occupied regions of Ukraine that began on Friday. Kyiv and the West have denounced the votes as a sham and said outcomes in favour of annexation are pre-determined.</p> <p>740 ARRESTS</p> <p>For the mobilisation effort, officials have said 300,000 troops are needed, with priority given to people with recent military experience and vital skills. The Kremlin has denied reports by two Russian news outlets based abroad - Novaya Gazeta Europe and Meduza - that the real target is more than 1 million.</p> <p>Russia officially counts millions of former conscripts as reservists - most of the male population of fighting age - and Wednesday's decree announcing the "partial mobilisation" gave no criteria for who would be called up.</p> <p>Reports have surfaced across Russia of men with no military experience or past draft age suddenly receiving call-up papers, adding to a wave of outrage that has revived dormant - and banned - anti-war demonstrations.</p> <p>More than 1,300 protesters were arrested in 38 towns on Wednesday, and on Saturday evening more than 740 were detained in over 30 towns and cities from St Petersburg to Siberia, according to the independent monitoring group OVD-Info.</p> <p>Reuters images from St Petersburg showed police in helmets and riot gear pinning protesters to the ground and kicking one of them before carrying them into vans.</p> <p>Earlier, the head of the Kremlin's Human Rights Council, Valery Fadeyev, publicly announced that he had written to Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu with a request to "urgently resolve" problems of the mobilisation.</p> <p>His 400-word Telegram posting criticised the way exemptions were being applied and listed several cases of inappropriate enlistment including nurses and midwives with no military experience.</p> <p>"Some (recruiters) hand over the call-up papers at 2 a.m., as if they think we're all draft dodgers," he said.</p>

'CANNON FODDER'

On Friday, two days after enlistment began, the defence ministry listed some sectors in which employers could nominate staff for exemptions.

There has been a particular outcry among ethnic minorities in remote, economically deprived areas in Siberia, where Russia's professional armed forces have long recruited disproportionately.

Since Wednesday, people have been prepared to queue for hours to cross into Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Finland or Georgia, scared that Russia might close its borders, although the Kremlin has said reports of an exodus are exaggerated.

The governor of Russia's Buryatia region, which adjoins Mongolia and is home to an ethnic Mongol minority, acknowledged on Friday that some had received papers in error and said those who had not served in the army or who had medical exemptions would not be called up.

On Saturday, Tsakhia Elbegdorj, president of Mongolia until 2017 and now head of the World Mongol Federation, promised those fleeing the draft, especially three Russian Mongol groups, a warm welcome, and bluntly called on Putin to end the war.

"The Buryat Mongols, Tuva Mongols, and Kalmyk Mongols have ... been used as nothing more than cannon fodder," he said in a video message, wearing a ribbon in Ukrainian yellow-and-blue.

"Today you are fleeing brutality, cruelty, and likely death. Tomorrow you will start freeing your country from dictatorship."

The mobilisation, and the hasty organisation of the votes in occupied Ukrainian territories, came hard on the heels of a lightning Ukrainian offensive in the Kharkiv region this month - Moscow's sharpest reverse of the seven-month-old war.

The interior ministry of the Russian region of North Ossetia advised people not to try to leave the country for Georgia at the Verkhny Lars frontier post, where it said 2,300 cars were waiting to cross.

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HEADLINE	09/24 Iran president warns anti-govt protesters
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/irans-president-warns-protesters-after-mahsa-amini-died-in-custody-after-arrest-for-wearing-hijab-too-loosely?ref=home
GIST	<p>On Sept. 13, Iran's morality police arrested a 22-year-old woman in Tehran for allegedly wearing her hijab too loosely in public, a violation of the country's dress code. Mahsa Amini was beaten in detention, her family says, and died three days after falling into a coma.</p> <p>Her death has sparked mass anti-government protests across the country—the largest swell of resistance against the Islamic Republic in years—and violent crackdowns on the demonstrations have killed as many as 35 people.</p> <p>In footage shared on social media, women are taking to the streets and removing their headscarves in defiance of the oppressive law. Some dropped their veils into a bonfire, others flouted the law by cutting their hair.</p> <p>On Saturday, President Ebrahim Raisi said Iran must “deal decisively with those who oppose the country's security and tranquility.” According to Reuters, state media reported that Raisi's comments arrived during a phone call with relatives of one member of the Basij pro-government paramilitary volunteer force who was killed during protests in the northeastern city of Mashhad.</p> <p>Raisi “stressed the necessity to distinguish between protest and disturbing public order and security, and called the events... a riot,” state media reported.</p>

	<p>Meanwhile, Iranian authorities disrupted cell service and imposed a blackout on global internet access in the country, blocking usage of Instagram and WhatsApp, in an attempt to quell the unrest. The maneuver makes it harder for citizens to share video of Iran's brutal response, which has reportedly included security forces opening fire on protesters.</p> <p>While Iranian security forces say Amini died of a heart attack and was never mistreated, CNN reported that her father, Amjad Amini, has accused officials of lying about her death and refusing to allow him to see her body or her autopsy report. Amini, a Kurdish woman from the northwestern city of Saez, died in a Tehran hospital.</p> <p>Amjad told BBC Persian that Mahsa's 17-year-old brother was with her when she was detained, and that witnesses told the sibling she had been beaten. "My son begged them not to take her, but he was beaten too, his clothes were ripped off," Amjad said, adding, "I asked them to show me the body-cameras of the security officers, they told me the cameras were out of battery."</p>
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HEADLINE	09/24 Protests grip Ukraine in Russia referendum
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/09/24/ukraine-second-day-referendums-protests-russian-soldiers/7321664035477/
GIST	<p>Sept. 24 (UPI) -- Soldiers going door-to-door in Russian-occupied parts of Ukraine were met with protests during Saturday's second day of referendum voting, official media reported, as the G7 nations condemned the poll as a sham.</p> <p>Rallies were held in several Ukrainian cities as people urged their fellow residents not to take part in the five-day vote now underway in the Luhansk, Kherson, Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions, according to the Ukrinform press agency.</p> <p>"We oppose the sham referendum in Mariupol. Today we have gathered so that the whole world hears that Mariupol is Ukraine," Mariupol resident Yulia Hryhor told the news service.</p> <p>The referendums are being held in areas that Russia controls, including Luhansk and Kherson, as well as in regions it partly controls such as Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia. The latter two make up the Donbas in eastern Ukraine, a region where pro-Russia separatists have been living for years and fighting the Ukrainian government in Kyiv.</p> <p>Soldiers carrying out the door-to-door canvassing the occupied regions are using intimidation to coerce voting, residents told Western media.</p> <p>"You have to answer verbally and the soldier marks the answer on the sheet and keeps it," one woman in Enerhodar told the BBC, while others said people were being given one ballot per household in some cities, not per person.</p> <p>The soldiers are only there for "security" reasons, Russia's state media reported, adding that Sept. 27 will be the only day for in-person voting.</p> <p>The leaders of the Group of Seven nations, meanwhile, condemned the "sham" referendums in a statement issued late Friday as Moscow looked to quickly annex parts of Ukraine, as it did in Crimea nearly a decade ago.</p> <p>"We, the Leaders of the Group of Seven (G7), strongly condemn the sham referenda that Russia attempts to use to create a phony pretext for changing the status of Ukrainian sovereign territory, which is subject to an ongoing Russian aggression. These actions clearly breach the United Nations Charter and international law and go diametrically against the rule of law among nations," the group said in a statement.</p>

	<p>"These sham referenda initiated today by Russia and its proxies have no legal effect or legitimacy, as demonstrated by Russia's hasty methods of organization, which in no way respect democratic norms, and its blatant intimidation of local populations."</p> <p>The referenda "in no way represent a legitimate expression of the will of the Ukrainian people, who have consistently resisted Russian efforts to change borders by force," the G7 statement reads. "We will never recognize these referenda, which appear to be a step toward Russian annexation, and we will never recognize a purported annexation if it occurs."</p> <p>Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called on newly-recruited Russian soldiers on Saturday to revolt and help sabotage the army from within by sharing intelligence with Kyiv.</p> <p>Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday announced a "partial mobilization" of reservists, calling up 300,000 soldiers.</p> <p>Thousands of Russians continued fleeing the country Friday after the Kremlin has increased penalties for refusal of service or desertion to 10 years in prison.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/24 Oregon campsites: crowded, high demand
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/crowded-campsites-high-demand-cause-fights-camp-pirates
GIST	<p>Salem, Ore. — Some Oregon parks officials say high demand for crowded campsites is leading to arguments, fistfights and even so-called “campsite pirates.”</p> <p>Brian Carroll with Linn County Parks and Recreation said park rangers have had to play mediator this summer as would-be campers argue over first-come, first-served campsites at Sunnyside County Park, the Statesman-Journal reported Friday.</p> <p>“People were literally fighting over campsites,” said Carroll. “What we experienced this year was certainly a general level of increased frustration and anxiety of people not being able to get their campsite. There seems to be less general common courtesy going on.”</p> <p>Tensions also escalated over reserved campsites, with some recreationists wrongly claiming already-reserved sites by tearing off the reservation tags and replacing them with their own, prompting the nickname “campsite pirates.” The original parties end up angry and confused when they arrive to find their campsite occupied. The practice isn't common, but it's happening more than it used to, Carroll said.</p> <p>“In the past, it was extremely rare,” he said. “Have there been disputes? Yeah, you know that happened previously. But like I said, not on the scale that we saw this year.”</p> <p>Sunnyside County Park isn't the only place experiencing such woes. Earlier this year, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department said it would seek legislation to give rangers added protection because of the increasing level of assaults and harassment targeting rangers.</p> <p>“Traditionally about 1% of our visitors really struggle with complying to rules and regulations,” said Dennis Benson, recreation manager for Deschutes National Forest. “Now, we’ve got more like 10% of the population that doesn’t comply or adhere with rules, regulations, those kinds of things, which is lending itself to more problematic behaviors on public lands.”</p> <p>Oregon's state park system has opened just three new campgrounds since 1972, though the state's population has increased dramatically.</p> <p>Last year, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department set records for its total numbers of visitors — an estimated 53.6 million day visits and 3.02 million campers who stayed overnight. This year’s numbers are about the same, state Parks and Recreation Department associate director Chris Havel said.</p>

	<p>“This summer we’ve been extremely busy, at 96% to 98% capacity, which basically means you might find a night here or there, but basically everything is taken,” Havel said. “What we’re noticing again this year is that it’s a lot of people new to camping and the outdoors in general. In other words, the trend that we saw start during the pandemic of people coming out for the first time is continuing, and that means we’re going to stay busy.”</p>
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HEADLINE	09/23 WA ranks #4 in nation for rising rent prices
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/washington-state-outpacing-majority-nation-when-it-comes-rising-rent/Q473MV6CMZG3BCAJKTSBM2OSTE/
GIST	<p>A new report from HelpAdvisor shows Washington state is outpacing the vast majority of the United States when it comes to rising rent prices.</p> <p>It is happening at the same time that the Seattle and Tacoma housing markets are cooling.</p> <p>In the last year, some 7.2 million people who pay rent have had to dig a lot deeper into their pockets, by at least \$250 per month, according to HelpAdvisor. In Washington that equates to 283,000 households.</p> <p>If you couple that fact with the knowledge that the Seattle and Tacoma housing markets are slowing down faster than other housing markets in the country, it results in fewer people being able to buy homes.</p> <p>That means there will be more renters, which analysts say will likely lead to higher rent prices.</p> <p>KIRO 7 found out that nearly half of Washington renters are paying more than \$1,500 monthly, putting Washington above the national average of one in three and putting the state at number four in the country when it comes to paying high rent.</p> <p>For reference, HelpAdvisor said 60% of Seattle renters are now paying more than \$1,500 a month for rent.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/24 Providence Swedish historic raises contract
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/providence-swedish-staffers-ratify-new-contract-with-historic-raises/
GIST	<p>More than 7,000 Providence Swedish health-care workers this week ratified a new contract that includes “historic” wage increases, bonuses and incentives and market adjustments for both nurses and service workers.</p> <p>The new contract, which was tentatively agreed to earlier this month, reflects “the largest economic package the workers have ever won at Providence Swedish” — including raises of 21.5% or \$6.50 an hour (whichever is higher) over two years — according to a statement from staffers’ labor union, SEIU Healthcare 1199NW.</p> <p>The hospital and its staffers reached an agreement nearly a year ahead of schedule, as the current contract doesn’t expire until July 2023.</p> <p>“With staffing levels being as dangerous as they are, both our union and Providence Swedish knew that equitable wage increases and incentives couldn’t wait until the next contract,” SEIU president Jane Hopkins said in the statement. “Everyone came to the table ready to collaborate in good faith, to apply racial justice principles and to elevate our union leadership’s vision of fostering anti-racist workplaces.”</p> <p>She continued, “We stayed true to our values, and we secured a historic economic package that will both keep health-care workers at Providence Swedish and recruit new workers.”</p>

In addition to across-the-board wage increases, the contract includes market adjustments for nurses, nursing assistants, respiratory therapists, emergency department technicians and other health-care staffers. It also includes a more accurate review process of crediting past health-care experience; incentive pay for lead roles and night and extra shifts; and bonuses to encourage workers to stay.

In total, the agreement offers an additional \$125 million to staffers, Swedish said in a statement.

“I am proud that we are significantly improving wages to support our caregivers and aid our retention and recruitment in a highly competitive market,” Swedish CEO Dr. R. Guy Hudson said in a statement. “I am especially pleased that we were able to provide a package that will benefit caregivers, reward longer-term team members for their years of service and boost our efforts to recruit and retain nurses.”

This week’s agreement reflects a much smoother and quicker bargaining process than what workers and hospital management endured during the last contract negotiation session more than two years ago. In 2020, thousands of hospital staffers went on strike for three days before they and the hospital finally came to an agreement a year after negotiations began.

That contract, still in effect, resulted in a 12.5% raise over three years.

This time around, both parties completed bargaining in just over a month.

“We knew we couldn’t repeat what happened two years ago,” said Carol Lightle, a charge nurse at Swedish Issaquah and a member of the bargaining team. “I don’t think that’s good for anyone. The last resort for workers is for us to walk away from our patients.”

The raises start to kick in on Oct. 14, followed by a 9.5% or \$3 increase in April 2023; a 4% or \$1.25 increase in October 2023; and a 4% or \$1 increase in October 2024.

“I’ve never seen anything like this,” Lightle said. “I’m so excited. People are so happy and thankful.”

Lightle said she was proud of the union’s bargaining team, and also credited Swedish’s management for “being committed to viewing the process from a racial justice lens and partnering on the journey.”

She noted she’s particularly proud of the contract’s moves to balance pay for service workers and non-nursing staffers, who are generally paid less than the nursing staff.

“It’s not OK we’re not being recognized in the same way,” she said. “Service workers are usually people of color or speak English as a second language. We wanted to uplift them because we’ve realized they’ve fallen behind [in pay].”

Swedish’s contract agreements come a few weeks after Seattle Children’s nurses, represented by the Washington State Nurses Association, [won significant raises](#) after 12 bargaining sessions with hospital management. More than 5,000 UW Medicine staffers, also represented by SEIU, are also in the midst of negotiations.

“I hope health-care workers can use this process [at Swedish] as a north star,” Lightle said, referring to both other hospitals’ bargaining sessions and Swedish’s future negotiations.

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HEADLINE	09/24 Federal govt. renames 19 WA creeks, lakes
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/derogatory-term-for-native-women-removed-from-wa-creek-lake-names/
GIST	To the northwest, Jarred-Michael Erickson can easily see Condon Mountain in the distance from his reservation’s government center in Eastern Washington.

The chair of the [Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation](#), Erickson will sometimes hike up the mountain. Travelers frequently use the dirt hunting roads that wind around base. Nespelem and Okanogan tribal members [historically fished](#) in the nearby creeks, streams and rivers.

Tribal members have called the mountain “Condon” for generations, Erickson said, in honor of a well-known family in the community. But for decades on federal maps and documents, the mountain bore the name “squaw,” a racist and sexist term used to describe Native American women.

That changed earlier this month, when the U.S. Department of the Interior announced it would remove the slur from [nearly 650 geographic features](#) on federal lands. It was a change that was decades in the making and long overdue, Erickson said.

“We’ve been here for thousands and thousands of years, time immemorial, and finally we’re getting recognition for what we’ve always been calling them,” Erickson said.

The announcement was the culmination of [yearslong](#) — and in some cases decadeslong — efforts by tribal groups across the country to align the official federal names of geological features such as springs, lakes and creeks with the names used by Native residents.

In Washington, the federal government [renamed 19 sites](#).

A lake in Mount Rainier National Park will be called Kiya Lake. A pair of islands in Klickitat County on the Columbia River is now called Sq’wanana, which means “two sitting on lap” and refers to a [legend in the Wishxam](#) and Klickitat tribes. A spring in Garfield County has been renamed South Tucannon Spring. The name [likely comes](#) from a variation on the word “tukanin,” which refers to the Indian breadroot plant in titoqatimt, a dialect of Nez Perce.

The origins of the original federal names for geological features vary. In Olympic National Park, for example, some places received their titles from [explorers whose treks were sponsored](#) by the Seattle Press newspaper between 1889-1890.

But for other places, including one of the park’s creeks, the stories behind the federal names remain unknown.

The creek is in an area where important high-elevation medicinal plants were collected in the summer, according Lia Frenchman, the historic preservation technologist for the Quinault Indian Nation.

“It is possible that the expedition or other historic colonial-settler may have seen a Native American gathering,” Frenchman wrote in a [renaming proposal](#) to the state earlier this year.

Quinault tribal members recommended renaming the creek “Noskeliikuu,” which means “the place where the whale dropped.” It’s a reference to an event witnessed by Quinault ancestors in the area, and a name used in oral histories for at least four generations, Frenchman wrote.

The Interior Department ultimately renamed the stream “Gathering Creek.”

Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland established the Derogatory Geographic Names Task Force in November to [remove and replace such](#) terms across federal lands. The task force consulted with nearly 70 tribal governments for recommendations, and received more than 1,000 suggestions from the public.

At the same time, Haaland formally declared the term for Native women derogatory, with the department [later publishing](#) the word as “sq_____.” While the term [may have derived](#) from the Algonquian word for “woman,” the meaning morphed into a [disparaging and offensive](#) term.

	<p>“Racist terms have no place in our vernacular or on our federal lands,” Haaland said in a statement at the time. “Our nation’s lands and waters should be places to celebrate the outdoors and our shared cultural heritage — not to perpetuate the legacies of oppression.”</p> <p>Haaland, a member of the Pueblo of Laguna and a 35th-generation New Mexican, is the first Native American to serve as a Cabinet secretary. Her appointment has been a “big reason” the federal government has finally acted to remove offensive terms from place names, Erickson said.</p> <p>It could be a sign of growing momentum toward better acknowledging Indigenous lands and histories, Erickson said. In Washington, he hopes to see the bilingual signs on highway markers statewide that include place names in Native languages.</p> <p>“I think that would be huge,” Erickson said. “We’re going back to what they’ve always been called [by Indigenous communities.] Then people get used to the language. Once they say it, they use it. It’s just relearning, relearning for non-Native Americans.”</p>
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HEADLINE	09/24 Entitled free care but hospitals sought fees
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/24/business/nonprofit-hospitals-poor-patients.html
GIST	<p>In 2018, senior executives at one of the country’s largest nonprofit hospital chains, Providence, were frustrated. They were spending hundreds of millions of dollars providing free health care to patients. It was eating into their bottom line.</p> <p>The executives, led by Providence’s chief financial officer at the time, devised a solution: a program called Rev-Up.</p> <p>Rev-Up provided Providence’s employees with a detailed playbook for wringing money out of patients — even those who were supposed to receive free care because of their low incomes, a New York Times investigation found.</p> <p>In training materials obtained by The Times, members of the hospital staff were instructed how to approach patients and pressure them to pay.</p> <p>“Ask every patient, every time,” the materials said. Instead of using “weak” phrases — like “Would you mind paying?” — employees were told to ask how patients wanted to pay. Soliciting money “is part of your role. It’s not an option.”</p> <p>If patients did not pay, Providence sent debt collectors to pursue them.</p> <p>More than half the nation’s roughly 5,000 hospitals are nonprofits like Providence. They enjoy lucrative tax exemptions; Providence avoids more than \$1 billion a year in taxes. In exchange, the Internal Revenue Service requires them to provide services, such as free care for the poor, that benefit the communities in which they operate.</p> <p>But in recent decades, many of the hospitals have become virtually indistinguishable from for-profit companies, adopting an unrelenting focus on the bottom line and straying from their traditional charitable missions.</p> <p>To understand the shift, The Times reviewed thousands of pages of court records, internal hospital financial records and memos, tax filings, and complaints filed with regulators, and interviewed dozens of patients, lawyers, current and former hospital executives, doctors, nurses and consultants.</p> <p>The Times found that the consequences have been stark. Many nonprofit hospitals were ill equipped for a flood of critically sick Covid-19 patients because they had been operating with skeleton staffs in an effort to cut costs and boost profits. Others lacked intensive care units and other resources to weather a pandemic</p>

because the nonprofit chains that owned them had [focused on investments in rich communities](#) at the expense of poorer ones.

And, as Providence illustrates, some hospital systems have not only reduced their emphasis on providing free care to the poor but also developed elaborate systems to convert needy patients into sources of revenue. The result, in the case of Providence, is that thousands of poor patients were saddled with debts that they never should have owed, The Times found.

Founded by nuns in the 1850s, Providence says its mission is to be “steadfast in serving all, especially those who are poor and vulnerable.” Today, based in Renton, Wash., Providence is one of the largest nonprofit health systems in the country, with 51 hospitals and more than 900 clinics. Its revenue last year exceeded \$27 billion.

Providence is sitting on \$10 billion that it invests, Wall Street-style, alongside top private equity firms. It even runs its own venture capital fund.

In 2018, before the Rev-Up program kicked in, Providence spent 1.24 percent of its expenses on charity care, a standard way of measuring how much free care hospitals [provide](#). That was below the average of 2 percent for nonprofit hospitals nationwide, according to an [analysis](#) of hospital financial records by Ge Bai, a professor at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

By last year, Providence’s spending on charity care had fallen below 1 percent of its expenses.

The Affordable Care Act requires nonprofit hospitals to make their financial assistance policies public, such as by posting them in hospital waiting rooms. But the federal law does not dictate who is eligible for free care.

[Ten states, however, have adopted their own laws](#) that specify which patients, based on their income and family size, qualify for free or discounted care. Among them is Washington, where Providence is based. All hospitals in the state must provide free care for anyone who makes under 300 percent of the federal poverty level. For a family of four, that threshold is \$83,250 a year.

In February, Bob Ferguson, the state’s attorney general, [accused](#) Providence of violating state law, in part by using debt collectors to pursue more than 55,000 patient accounts. The suit alleged that Providence wrongly claimed those patients owed a total of more than \$73 million.

Providence, which is fighting the lawsuit, has said it will stop using debt collectors to pursue money from low-income patients who should qualify for free care in Washington.

But The Times found that the problems extend beyond Washington. In interviews, patients in California and Oregon who qualified for free care said they had been charged thousands of dollars and then harassed by collection agents. Many saw their credit scores ruined. Others had to cut back on groceries to pay what Providence claimed they owed. In both states, nonprofit hospitals are required by law to provide low-income patients with free or discounted care.

“I felt a little betrayed,” said Bev Kolpin, 57, who had worked as a sonogram technician at a Providence hospital in Oregon. Then she went on unpaid leave to have surgery to remove a cyst. The hospital billed her \$8,000 even though she was eligible for discounted care, she said. “I had worked for them and given them so much, and they didn’t give me anything.” (The hospital forgave her debt only after a lawyer contacted Providence on Ms. Kolpin’s behalf.)

Gregory Hoffman, Providence’s chief financial officer, said in an interview that The Times’s findings about the hospital system’s treatment of poor patients “are very concerning and have our attention.” He said Providence wanted “to get things right, on behalf of our communities and on behalf of our patients,” though he acknowledged that the Rev-Up program initially had “some hiccups,” including sending Medicaid patients to debt collectors.

Melissa Tizon, a spokeswoman for Providence, said the health system stopped doing that in December, although that was two years after an executive raised internal alarms about the practice. Providence has also instructed the debt collection firms it works with to not use “any aggressive tactics such as garnishing wages or reporting delinquent accounts to credit agencies,” she said.

Ms. Tizon said Providence was the largest provider of charity care in Washington. While the hospital system has been providing less of that care in recent years, she said, Providence has been treating more patients on Medicaid, the federal-state insurance program for poor people.

“Our practices comply with and in many instances exceed state requirements,” she said.

Paying With Poultry

Providence’s transformation from a small charitable organization to a huge hospital system mirrors the story of the country’s nonprofit hospitals.

Providence was founded in 1856 when, at the request of a local bishop, Mother Joseph and four other nuns from the Sisters of Providence trekked from Montreal to Vancouver, Wash., to provide services to the poor. Their first hospital, St. Joseph, was a single room with four beds. The hospital charged patients \$1 a day, not including extras like whiskey.

Patients rarely paid in cash, sometimes offering chickens, ducks and blankets in exchange for care.

At the time, hospitals in the United States were set up to do what Providence did — provide inexpensive care to the poor. Wealthier people usually hired doctors to treat them at home.

Given their work serving the indigent, hospitals were exempted from state and federal taxes.

That system remained relatively unchanged until the federal government created Medicare and Medicaid in the 1960s. Millions more people suddenly had insurance that covered medical expenses.

The I.R.S. began allowing hospitals to justify their tax exemptions by providing a broader range of loosely defined benefits to their communities beyond treating patients for free. Some hospitals took advantage of the new leeway, arguing that things like employees’ salaries counted toward the I.R.S. requirement.

Top government officials warned that hospitals were abusing their privileged status as nonprofits.

“Some tax-exempt health care providers may not differ markedly from for-profit providers in their operations, their attention to the benefit of the community or their levels of charity care,” the I.R.S. commissioner Mark W. Everson wrote to the Senate in 2005.

Some hospital executives have embraced the comparison to for-profit companies. Dr. Rod Hochman, Providence’s chief executive, told an industry publication in 2021 that “‘nonprofit health care’ is a misnomer.”

“It is tax-exempt health care,” he said. “It still makes profits.”

Those profits, he added, support the hospital’s mission. “Every dollar we make is going to go right back into Seattle, Portland, Los Angeles, Alaska and Montana.”

Since Dr. Hochman took over in 2013, Providence has become a financial powerhouse. Last year, it earned \$1.2 billion in profits through investments. (So far this year, Providence has lost money.)

Providence also owes some of its wealth to its nonprofit status. In 2019, the latest year available, Providence received roughly \$1.2 billion in federal, state and local tax breaks, according to the Lown Institute, a think tank that studies health care.

The greater the hospital system's profits, the more money it could pump into expanding. In addition, the greater its cash reserves, the stronger its credit rating. A pristine rating allowed Providence to inexpensively borrow money, which it could then funnel into further growth.

Over the past decade, Providence has opened or acquired 18 hospitals. Dr. Hochman earned \$10 million in 2020.

'Don't Accept the First No'

Even before the Rev-Up program, Providence was collecting money from poor patients, sometimes in violation of state laws, according to five current and former executives and a review of patient complaints filed with regulators.

Harriet Haffner-Ratliffe, 20, gave birth to twins at a Providence hospital in Olympia, Wash., in 2017. She was eligible under state law for charity care.

Providence did not inform her. Instead it billed her almost \$2,300. The hospital put her on a roughly \$100-a-month payment plan.

It was more than Ms. Haffner-Ratliffe, who was unemployed, could afford. She had to ration gas for her car. One day, her boyfriend walked into their apartment and found her surrounded by bills, crying. When she fell behind on the payments, Providence dispatched a debt collector to pursue her.

For people already on the financial brink, debt collection companies can push them over the edge. The companies often inform credit-rating firms about patients' debts, which can torpedo their credit scores. That, in turn, can make it much harder and more expensive to buy or rent a car or home or to borrow money.

Ms. Haffner-Ratliffe's ordeal chopped her credit score by about 200 points. For years, she couldn't get a credit card. (Ms. Tizon, the Providence spokeswoman, said that the hospital had told Ms. Haffner-Ratliffe about how to seek financial aid but that she had not completed her application. Ms. Haffner-Ratliffe and her parents dispute that.)

Around that time, in 2018, Providence was looking for ways to save money. It had recently merged with another nonprofit hospital system, and integrating the two was expensive.

Providence turned to the consulting firm McKinsey & Company. The firm's assignment was to maximize the money that Providence collected from its patients, the five current and former executives said. In essence, the hospital system wanted to apply the tactics it had used with Ms. Haffner-Ratliffe to even more patients.

McKinsey's solution was Rev-Up, whose name was an apparent reference to the goal of accelerating revenue growth.

Training materials instructed administrative staff to tell patients — no matter how poor — that "payment is expected," according to documents included in Washington's lawsuit and training materials obtained by The Times. Six current and former hospital employees said in interviews that they had been told not to mention the financial aid that states like Washington required Providence to provide.

One training document, titled "Don't accept the first No," led staff through a series of questions to ask patients. The first was "How would you like to pay that today?" If that did not work, employees were told to ask for half the balance. Failing that, staff could offer to set up a payment plan. Only as a last resort, the documents explained, should workers tell patients that they may be eligible for financial assistance.

Another training document explained what to do if patients expressed surprise that a charitable hospital was pressuring them to pay. The suggested response: "We are a nonprofit. However, we want to inform

our patients of their balances as soon as possible and help the hospital invest in patient care by reducing billing costs.”

Staff members were then instructed to shift the conversation to “how would you like to take care of this today?”

Exhorting employees to do their jobs well, some versions of the training materials invoked a famous line from a speech by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: “If it falls your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures.”

Ms. Tizon, the spokeswoman for Providence, said the intent of Rev-Up was “not to target or pressure those in financial distress.” Instead, she said, “it aimed to provide patients with greater pricing transparency.”

“We recognize the tone of the training materials developed by McKinsey was not consistent with our values,” she said, adding that Providence modified the materials “to ensure we are communicating with each patient with compassion and respect.”

But employees who were responsible for collecting money from patients said the aggressive tactics went beyond the scripts provided by McKinsey. In some Providence collection departments, wall-mounted charts shaped like oversize thermometers tracked employees’ progress toward hitting their monthly collection goals, the current and former Providence employees said.

On Halloween at one of Providence’s hospitals, an employee dressed up as a wrestler named Rev-Up Ricky, according to the Washington lawsuit. Another costume featured a giant cardboard dollar sign with “How” printed on top of it, referring to the way the staff was supposed to ask patients how, not whether, they would pay. Ms. Tizon said such costumes were “not the culture we strive for.”

The Rev-Up program alarmed some Providence employees.

“It was awful working for this rich system and not being able to help people who were just crying in front of me,” said Stephanie Shufelt, who worked in patient registration at a Providence hospital in Portland, Ore., until February 2021.

Taylor Davison, who worked in the emergency department of a Providence hospital in Santa Rosa, Calif., until last year, said Providence’s tactics had struck her as predatory. She was told to approach patients as soon as doctors had finished examining them. She would crouch at their bedside and ask for money. She was required to document in the patients’ charts that she had repeatedly pushed for payments.

Employees were urged to collect any amount, no matter how small, she said. Some patients offered as little as \$2, which she accepted.

“Here are people coming in at the worst moment of their lives, and I’m asking them to empty their wallets,” Ms. Davison said.

Providence paid McKinsey at least \$45 million in 2019 for its assistance, tax filings show.

Warning About Harm to Patients

When patients left a hospital without paying, Providence sent them at least three bills. If they still did not pay, they would receive one last warning.

“This is your final opportunity to pay your account,” one such letter said. Otherwise, it went on, Providence would enlist “a third-party agency that may adversely affect your credit rating.”

Under Washington’s law, Providence was supposed to screen patients at the hospital to assess whether they qualified for free or discounted care. But Providence often checked patients’ income only after

months of hounding them had failed, according to depositions included in the Washington lawsuit and internal memos that a former Providence executive shared with The Times.

At that point, Providence ran accounts through a screening tool provided by Experian, a credit reporting company, to determine whether accounts were eligible for free care.

But despite Rev-Up, the amount of free care that Providence was providing was “spiking,” an executive later explained in an email to colleagues. So in 2019, Providence’s chief financial officer at the time, Venkat Bhamidipati, and other executives made a change, according to the five current and former Providence executives and depositions included in Washington’s lawsuit.

Previously, when treating patients who were on Medicaid, Providence eventually waived any outstanding portion of their bill. In 2019, Providence stopped doing that. Medicaid patients were sent to debt collectors instead. That appeared to violate laws in Washington, Oregon and California that required nonprofit hospitals to provide free care to patients earning below certain thresholds, according to regulators.

Some Providence executives warned that the changes were harming patients.

“I just want it made clear to our leadership that patients that would normally have been eligible for charity care are going to bad debt,” Lesa Wood, a director of financial counseling and assistance, emailed colleagues in late 2019.

In 2020, a Providence executive wrote to co-workers to report that the system’s charity care spending was down “across all markets.”

Skimping on Groceries

In November 2020, Paulo Aguirre went to a Providence hospital in Orange County, Calif., with a splitting headache, blurred vision and nausea. Doctors gave him a shot that made the pain “go right away,” he said.

Mr. Aguirre earned minimum wage working at a dental office and was on California’s version of Medicaid, known as Medi-Cal. Under California law and Providence’s financial assistance policy, his low income qualified him for free care.

In early 2021, Mr. Aguirre said, he received a bill from Providence for \$4,394.45. He told Providence that he could not afford to pay.

Providence sent his account to Harris & Harris, a debt collection company. Mr. Aguirre said that Harris & Harris employees had called him repeatedly for weeks and that the ordeal made him wary of going to Providence again.

“I try my best not to go to their emergency room even though my daughters have gotten sick, and I got sick,” Mr. Aguirre said, noting that one of his daughters needed a biopsy and that he had trouble breathing when he had Covid. “I have this big fear in me.”

That is the outcome that hospitals like Providence may be hoping for, said Dean A. Zerbe, who investigated nonprofit hospitals when he worked for the Senate Finance Committee under Senator Charles E. Grassley, Republican of Iowa.

“They just want to make sure that they never come back to that hospital and they tell all their friends never to go back to that hospital,” Mr. Zerbe said.

Last October, an ambulance rushed Alexandra Nyfors to the Providence hospital in Everett, Wash. A diabetic, she was severely dehydrated, and her kidneys were failing. Providence put her on intravenous medications to treat an underlying infection. She spent about two weeks in the hospital.

Ms. Nyfors, 66, is covered by Medicare, and her only income is about \$1,700 a month in federal disability payments. Under Providence's policies and state law, she was eligible for free care because of her low income.

But Providence billed her \$1,950 — the amount left over after Medicare covered its share. The remaining sum was daunting. It was getting colder, and Ms. Nyfors knew her heating bill would gobble up much of her monthly check. But when she went on the hospital's website, she said, there were only two choices: Pay in full or set up a payment plan.

Ms. Nyfors agreed to have \$162.50 automatically withdrawn from her bank account each month until the bill was settled. She started buying fewer groceries, she said. She went without heat. She split her medication in two to make it last longer.

She had no idea she qualified for free care until she read about Washington's lawsuit. After Ms. Nyfors was interviewed by The Everett Daily Herald, Providence forgave her bill and refunded the payments she had made.

In June, she got another letter from Providence. This one asked her to donate money to the hospital: "No gift is too small to make a meaningful impact."

Following a Script 'Like Robots'

In 2019, Vanessa Weller, a single mother who is a manager at a Wendy's restaurant in Anchorage, went to Providence Alaska Medical Center, the state's largest hospital.

She was 24 weeks pregnant and experiencing severe abdominal pains. "Let this just be cramps," she recalled telling herself.

Ms. Weller was in labor. She gave birth via cesarean section to a boy who weighed barely a pound. She named him Isaiah. As she was lying in bed, pain radiating across her abdomen, she said, a hospital employee asked how she would like to pay. She replied that she had applied for Medicaid, which she hoped would cover the bill.

After five days in the hospital, Isaiah died.

Then Ms. Weller got caught up in Providence's new, revenue-boosting policies.

The phone calls began about a month after she left the hospital. Ms. Weller remembers panicking when Providence employees told her what she owed: \$125,000, or about four times her annual salary.

She said she had repeatedly told Providence that she was already stretched thin as a single mother with a toddler. Providence's representatives asked if she could pay half the amount. On later calls, she said, she was offered a payment plan.

"It was like they were following some script," she said. "Like robots."

Later that year, a Providence executive questioned why Ms. Weller had a balance, given her low income, according to emails disclosed in Washington's litigation with Providence. A colleague replied that her debts previously would have been forgiven but that Providence's new policy meant that "balances after Medicaid are being excluded from presumptive charity process."

Ms. Weller said she had to change her phone number to make the calls stop. Her credit score plummeted from a decent 650 to a lousy 400. She has not paid any of her bill.

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SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/health/wa-is-stuck-with-a-travel-nurse-dilemma-pitting-care-against-costs/
GIST	<p>When Kevin Saavedra landed at Seattle’s Harborview Medical Center in February, it became the sixth hospital he’s worked at in less than three years.</p> <p>He drives from place to place, his two Rottweilers in tow, and has a growing list of states he’d be eager to return to.</p> <p>Saavedra is a travel nurse, one of thousands in the United States contracted to work short-term stints in hospitals. Historically, the role has helped bolster staffs during occasional times of peak injury or illness — winter flu season, for example.</p> <p>Now, hospitals need them to survive, but the shift has come at a big cost.</p> <p>Hospitals continue to lean on travelers because the influx of patients has not slowed in months — some are in for COVID-19 treatments, but many are admitted for summer injuries or delayed care due to the pandemic.</p> <p>Health care leaders say they are caught in a messy cycle: Hospitals need travel nurses to cover standard shifts, but travelers are expensive, and the longer hospitals retain high levels of contract nurses, the worse financial shape they’ll be in.</p> <p>Salaries for travelers, whose pay rates can be up to two or three times more than a permanent staffer’s, are one of the major reasons hospital systems in the Pacific Northwest — home to a large community of travel nurses — are having budget problems, hospital leaders say. And it leads to morale issues with the permanent nurses.</p> <p>Short-term solutions are unclear, leaving hospitals and their staffers to navigate complex discussions around the future of the health care workforce. That might mean slowly reducing the reliance on these travel nurses or providing new and different opportunities for nurses who call Seattle home.</p> <p>It’s quiet at the start of a recent night shift on one of Harborview’s telemetry floors, where staffers focus on cardiac monitoring, and Saavedra has time to chat with one of his favorite patients, who’s been recovering from back surgery for the past week.</p> <p>Robin Rebecca Lerum, of Gig Harbor, is still in pain and unable to walk just yet, though she’ll start physical therapy the following day, but piles on praise for the nursing staff the minute Saavedra walks in. Despite her injuries, she always thanks them, he said.</p> <p>“It’s like a bottomless well of patience here,” said Lerum, 64. She pauses to wipe away a few tears. “The compassion and kindness is kind of overwhelming.”</p> <p>It’s Saavedra’s sixth shift in a row, though he was only initially scheduled to work three, and he’s exhausted. But patients like Lerum make things easier — and are partly why, along with Seattle’s cultural diversity and natural beauty, he’s extended his Harborview contract three times.</p> <p>Before starting in Seattle, Saavedra worked monthslong contracts in New Jersey, Missouri, Texas and North Carolina. He likes the pay, but is also drawn to the freedom the nomadic role offers, the opportunity to live in different parts of the country and the ability to often sidestep hospital politics.</p> <p>“People are always like, ‘Oh, it’s all about the money,’ ” the 29-year-old Charleston, South Carolina native said. “And that is a very good incentive. But underlying, if you’re being treated right, if you like your co-workers, if you’re being taken care of — you’ll actually want to stay.”</p> <p>“For me, it’s about what you want out of life, and your happiness and mental health,” he continued.</p>

On Saavedra's floor at Harborview, travelers make up at least half the nurses on the night shift, charge nurse Taylor Radford said. She's noticed traveler numbers are starting to fall slightly, but the unit still depends on them. And that's hurt the bottom line.

This summer, the Washington State Hospital Association reported hospitals across the state suffered a net loss of about \$929 million in the first three months of 2022. While operating revenue increased by 5%, operating expenses increased by 11%.

Association CEO Cassie Sauer said at the time that if the trend continued, hospitals would likely have to cut some services or close inpatient units — or, in a worst-case scenario, close or file for bankruptcy. Some large Seattle hospitals have already shown signs of strain.

In August, for example, a lack of bed space and an increasing number of high-cost patients staying for long periods forced Harborview to temporarily divert some patients to nearby hospitals.

The hospital began to again accept all types of patients the following week, but Mark Taylor, Harborview senior associate administrator, later said he wasn't confident they'd be able to avoid similar disruptions in the future.

In addition, Providence Regional Medical Center Everett has temporarily stopped accepting patients to its inpatient pediatrics unit. Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital is having trouble staffing all their beds.

Because of the continued staffing strains, travel nurses are still in fairly high demand in the Seattle area despite some nationwide reports that the "travel-nurse bubble" has popped. While rates are starting to settle back down after soaring to new heights earlier in the pandemic, local hospital leaders say they're already starting to see demand creep back up as fall — and respiratory illness season — approaches.

At Providence Swedish, for example, previous bill rates, set by staffing agencies, capped at \$150 per hour have fallen to about \$111 per hour.

"I don't think the [travel-nurse] bubble has burst," Kevin Brooks, chief operating officer of Providence Swedish, said in an interview. "I think it's normalizing in a post-pandemic world, at a rate much higher than we were pre-pandemic."

"Supply and demand 101"

During the pandemic, as nurse burnout peaked and turnover rates rose, so did the number of people interested in leaving full-time employment for these contract spots.

Silas Emrys, another traveler working at Harborview, discovered contract nursing during a time when he was tight on cash. He had been working at a hospital in Denver for about a year, and liking it for the most part — but he felt like he wasn't paid enough because of the high cost of living there. Then, a new business venture for his parents, who had moved home to the Philippines, went south.

"I had pretty much sent all my savings to help them out," said Emrys, 35. "I was close to bankruptcy. My credit cards were maxed out."

A few months later, he started his first travel assignment at Harborview.

He sometimes misses the stability of a permanent staff job, but says it's hard to find one that pays as well as travel jobs do.

"I want to be able to comfortably take care of them," he said of his parents. "They're older and ... I want them to live their life in pursuit of their own happiness. I can't have that in the back of my mind — them struggling — without trying to help."

Brooks acknowledged the benefits of travel nursing and said it's easy to see why nurses would be drawn to the job.

"It builds great flexibility in their lifestyle and they get to tour the country and see different places," Brooks said. "And for some of them, it's just a great economic opportunity. And no one faults them for this, by the way. I get it. It's supply and demand 101. But it certainly is a problem for us to solve in health care."

Between January and June this year, Providence Swedish spent about \$167 million on traveler contracts — more than three times the amount the hospital system spent on travel nurses during the same time period in 2019 (before Swedish merged with Providence).

MultiCare, another large Washington hospital system with locations in the Puget Sound region and the Spokane area, is spending about \$30 million more per month on overtime, premium pay and travelers compared with before the pandemic, according to hospital figures sent to The Seattle Times.

By mid-2022, MultiCare had spent \$187 million on travelers — compared with \$160 million in all of 2021, \$71 million in 2020 and \$68 million in 2019.

Virginia Mason Franciscan Health spent 500% more on travelers in the last 12 months compared with the prior year.

Hospitals say they're doing what they can to reduce traveler head counts and costs, but the travelers are still filling needed roles, Brooks said.

That reality is frustrating to many permanent staff nurses — some who had been at the same hospital for years without seeing anything close to a traveler's salary, and who were suddenly tasked with leading training after training for temporary co-workers.

"The nurses see what the travelers are making that are working right next to them," said Edna Cortez, a registered nurse at Seattle Children's who has considered traveling but says she loves her patients too much to leave. "I've been at Children's for 30 years and I've worked with travelers that have way less experience than me and make more money than I do as a staff nurse. That's really difficult."

It's not their fault, she said, adding that it's up to hospitals to better balance wages and keep in mind how the pay gap might affect the morale and mental health of permanent staffers.

"Nobody blames them. ... And we really appreciate the support and the help of our travelers," said Erin Doyle, who's worked as a Children's nurse for almost three years. "They are doing us a great service by helping us. But it is hard and frustrating when it gets to the point where almost half of our staff on certain floors and on certain units are travelers."

Some recent negotiations between hospitals and their permanent nursing staffs have led to ratified contracts that include significant raises and incentives, including at Children's and Providence Swedish. While workers say the pay increases are just the first step toward increasing long-term retention rates, Cortez called the new contracts huge wins.

Still, health care labor unions have argued that hospitals had long known about the coming nurse shortage and they could have done more to bolster their workforce.

Brooks, of Providence Swedish, has pushed back against that thought, saying that at his hospital system, administrators hired "to patient demand," meaning that although there's always a need for more nurses, the hospital was "volume-adjusting [its] workforce appropriately" heading into the pandemic.

"We do desire to pay our own caregivers more and reduce agency [staffers], and we're trying to walk that line," he said.

A changing industry

Hospital and health care experts have acknowledged for months that the industry is evolving, and that goes well beyond the reliance on contract nurses. They've witnessed a recent rise in telenursing and gig nursing opportunities. Many new nurses are prioritizing part-time work, opting for a more stable work-life balance. Tech companies are digging into health care.

One new startup in particular has caught the eye of Providence Swedish leaders.

CareRev, an online marketplace started by a former RN in San Francisco, aims to connect nurses with open shifts at different, local hospitals. Unlike travel contracts, which often require nurses to work the same assignment for a minimum of 12 weeks, CareRev pairs nurses up with one-off shifts. Nurses could work at a different hospital every week, blocking out whichever days or times they want.

Earlier this year, Providence Swedish picked up more than 1,000 nursing shifts through CareRev. While the gig system isn't the most ideal for hospitals, most of whom would prefer to employ their own staffers, Brooks said, health care leaders really have no choice but to get on board.

"The train has left the station," said Brooks. "Nurses are going to do this. It's too convenient for them not to. And so we can bury our head in the sand or we can accept the reality that the workforce is changing and we need to be able to accommodate gig workers."

While pay rates for gig nurses vary by hospital, they generally trend closer to traveler rates, as opposed to those of permanent staffers, said Natalie Kozimor, a Providence Swedish spokesperson.

At the same time, the priority remains on retaining permanent staffers, he said.

And while a wave of burnt out nurses made the jump to travel roles during the pandemic, some have made the opposite move.

Nicole Bohn, who joined UW Medical Center Northwest as a traveler at the end of April, said she sought out an assignment in Washington because she'd heard good things about nursing in the Northwest.

She started on an orthopedic floor, supporting patients with broken bones or recovering from surgery, and liked it so much that she decided to apply for a permanent position. Starting in October, Bohn will be a night-shift clinical nurse educator, providing support to new night nurses in the emergency department and acute care and intensive care units.

Hospitals would like to see more nurses making the shift like Bohn, but they are realistic. Relying on travelers and shouldering the extra cost won't go away quickly.

"This is probably a new normal for an unforeseen duration," Brooks said. "This is not a short-term crisis."

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Cyber, Tech Awareness

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HEADLINE	09/25 LinkedIn secret experiments on 20M users
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Science_News/2022/09/25/linkedin-ran-secret-experiments-20-million-users-strength-weak-social-ties/7411664131874/
GIST	Sept. 25 (UPI) -- LinkedIn ran secret social experiments on around 20 million of the site's users in a sweeping five-year study on the strength of social ties in professional networking, according to researchers.

In a study [published in the journal Science](#), researchers conducted "multiple large-scale randomized experiments" from 2015 to 2019 using the professional networking site's People You May Know algorithm to test the strength a person's weaker social ties have on the job hunt.

The team, led by LinkedIn researchers Karthik Rajkumar and Guillaume Saint-Jacques, included researchers from MIT, Harvard Business School and Stanford University.

LinkedIn did not notify users they were the subject of social experiments before running them.

Tech companies often carry out similar experiments, known as A/B testing, to improve user experiences but the LinkedIn study shows how such practices can impact people's lives such as their ability to find jobs.

However, the study authors wrote that the experiments generated "2 billion new ties and 600,000 new jobs" that were created. LinkedIn's [privacy policy](#) notes that users' personal data can be used to conduct research on "social, economic and workplace trends."

The study centered on the theory in sociology of the Strength of Weak Ties, described by the authors as "one of the most influential social theories of the past century."

"Weak ties are thought to be specifically well suited to deliver new employment opportunities because they provide novel labor market information, making job mobility a centerpiece of the original weak tie theory," the study reads.

In its experiments, LinkedIn randomly adjusted its algorithm for users to emphasize either stronger or weaker ties for users in the People You May Know feature, which suggests people for connection.

As a result, some people formed either more or fewer connections with weaker ties than stronger ties than people in the opposing group.

The company then analyzed data from the people in the groups to determine which was more successful in seeking employment.

The study found that a person's weak social ties on LinkedIn, which is owned by Microsoft, were twice as effective as stronger ties in helping them find jobs.

"The findings suggest that some users had better access to job opportunities or a meaningful difference in access to job opportunities," Michael Zimmer, director of Marquette University's Center for Data, Ethics and Society, [told The New York Times](#).

"These are the kind of long-term consequences that need to be contemplated when we think of the ethics of engaging in this kind of big data research."

Rajkumar defended the professional networking site's study and said he was "proud of this work" which was "done using historical data" [in a statement](#) on LinkedIn.

"Everyone on LinkedIn was better off, and no one worse off, during and as a result of this study," Rajkumar said.

"If even one person reaches out to a weak tie in their professional network and secures a job thanks to our study, then our work has been a success. We can't wait to see how the study helps companies, recruiters and job seekers change the way we think about the labor market."

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HEADLINE	09/23 British teen arrested in hacking case
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/british-teen-arrested-in-hacking-case/

GIST	<p>British police arrested a 17-year-old from Oxfordshire, England, on Thursday as part of a hacking investigation, the City of London Police announced Friday.</p> <p>The agency declined to share any additional information Friday morning, as did the U.K.'s National Crime Agency, whose National Cyber Crime Unit supported the investigation.</p> <p>While it's not yet clear who the suspect is, the arrest comes eight days after Uber's systems were breached, followed shortly after by the high-profile hack of Rockstar Games, with the attacker leaking development footage from the highly anticipated upcoming installment of the Grand Theft Auto video game.</p> <p>The FBI did not immediately respond to a request for comment Friday morning.</p> <p>An Uber statement on Sept. 19 blamed Lapsus\$ for the intrusion. Lapsus\$ is a hacking group that had successfully targeted major corporations such as Microsoft, Nvidia, Okta and Ubisoft in a string of hacks in the spring of 2022.</p> <p>British police arrested seven people in late March, aged 16 to 21, as part of an investigation into Lapsus\$. Two of the suspects in that case, aged 16 and 17, were charged with three counts of unauthorized access to a computer with intent to impair the reliability of the data, one count of fraud by false representation and one count of unauthorized access to a computer with intent to hinder access to data. The 16-year-old faced an additional count of causing a computer to perform a function to secure unauthorized access to a program.</p> <p>Ahead of the arrests, Bloomberg reported that a 16-year-old British teenager, who went by online aliases including "White" and "breachbase," was the mastermind of the attacks. That teenager, along with several family members, was doxxed in March, ahead of the Bloomberg story.</p> <p>The people behind the release of that information posted an additional note Sept. 18 claiming the teen was responsible for hacking Uber and Rockstar Games and said he "works with a team of (not-so) skilled individuals who use him as a front man/mule to spread the word of said breaches." On Friday, the people posted again, citing the arrest and saying that "his OPSEC was obsolete and his friends used him as a mule."</p>
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HEADLINE	09/26 Ukraine arrests cybercrime group
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2022/09/ukraine-arrests-cybercrime-group-for.html
GIST	<p>Ukrainian law enforcement authorities on Friday disclosed that it had "neutralized" a hacking group operating from the city of Lviv that it said acted on behalf of Russian interests.</p> <p>The group specialized in the sales of 30 million accounts belonging to citizens from Ukraine and the European Union on the dark web and netted a profit of \$372,000 (14 million UAH) through electronic payment systems like YooMoney, Qiwi, and WebMoney that are outlawed in the country.</p> <p>"Their 'wholesale clients' were pro-kremlin propagandists," the Security Service of Ukraine (SSU) said in a press release. "It was them who used the received identification data of Ukrainian and foreign citizens to spread fake 'news' from the front and sow panic."</p> <p>The goal behind the campaign was "large-scale destabilization in multiple countries," it stated, adding the hacked accounts were used to propagate false information about the socio-political situation in Ukraine and the E.U.</p> <p>Searches carried out at the suspects' homes revealed magnetic disks containing personal data as well as computer equipment, mobile phones, SIM cards, and flash drives that exhibited evidence of illicit activities.</p>

	<p>The development comes weeks after the agency moved to shut down two bot farms comprising nearly 7,000 accounts that were orchestrated to spread information designed to destabilize the social and political situation in Ukraine.</p> <p>"Their main activity was creation and promotion of accounts in social networks and messengers," it noted. "The group used the bots to spread panic in the region, for example, by disseminating disinformation and fake news from the front."</p>
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HEADLINE	09/23 Large fraudulent online credit card scheme
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/news/cybercrime/scammers-stole-tens-of-millions-since-2019-using-online-credit-card-scheme
GIST	<p>Researchers on Friday uncovered what they claim may be one of the largest fraudulent online credit card schemes active today.</p> <p>The bad actors duped payment providers to accept payments and then the scammers use fake credit card numbers purchased on the darkweb to receive fraudulent payments.</p> <p>In a blog post, ReasonLabs researchers said this widespread global credit card scam has been operating since 2019 and has amassed tens of millions of dollars in fraud from the stolen credit card numbers of tens of thousands of individuals.</p> <p>The researchers believe the threat group functions as a crime syndicate that originated in Russia. This ongoing scam tends to abuse several security brands to execute fraudulent credit card charges. The threat group built its infrastructure on top of AWS and uses GoDaddy to circulate hundreds of domains.</p> <p>Here's how it works: The syndicate operates a massive fake network of dating and adult websites with functional customer support capabilities. Once the sites are live, the scammers coerce payment providers and ultimately gain the ability to accept credit card payments. Once that happens, the threat actors search the darknet and acquire thousands of stolen credit cards and charge them to their fake website's services.</p> <p>"The size of the scam — in the tens of millions, coupled with the fact that it has been live for more than three years — is most surprising," said Andrew Newman, founder and CTO of ReasonLabs. "The fact that it went unnoticed for so long, with so many parties involved, is also unique."</p> <p>Matt Mullins, senior security researcher at Cybrary, said that credit card scams have been around forever in a number of iterations, with this newer iteration having been a simple variation on old tricks. Mullins said typically, criminals will improve just enough to continue to acquire massive profit on minimal effort — thus, a great return on investment.</p> <p>"This network of scamming websites appears to have the watermark of some modicum of sophistication, though, with even a potential degree of automation due to the re-use of multiple assets with throw-away domain names," Mullins said.</p> <p>Joseph Carson, chief security scientist and advisory CISO at Delinea, added that many fake, fraudulent websites that appear official are, in fact, scams. Carson said these scams can result in stealing the victims credentials, passwords, credit card information, infecting their computer or smartphone with malicious software or even ransomware.</p> <p>"They could also lead the unknowing victim to spread malware to family and friends, losing sensitive data or resulting in a major financial impact, such as seen here," Carson said. "It's always important to be vigilant and cautious from any website links as to whether or not they are actually authenticate. Many scams are so good these days that they are difficult to detect. If it's too good to be true, then it is more than likely a scam."</p>
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HEADLINE	09/23 Anonymous: hack of Russian reservists
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/russian-reservists-leaked-anonymous/
GIST	<p>Hacktivist collective Anonymous has claimed to have leaked the personal data of over 300,000 individuals likely to be mobilized by the Russian government to fight in Ukraine.</p> <p>In a message posted on one of the group's Twitter accounts on Friday, September 23, 2022, Anonymous TV (@YourAnonTV), it said it had "hacked the website of the Russian Ministry of Defense and leaked the data of 305,925 people who are likely to be mobilized in the first of three waves of mobilization."</p> <p>An image was posted purporting show the personal information of these individuals.</p> <p>Anonymous' claim followed a national address by Russian President Vladimir Putin just two days earlier, on September 21, in which a partial military mobilization of 300,000 reservists was announced to bolster the Kremlin's so-called special military operation in Ukraine. This announcement came in response to a major counter-offensive by Ukraine's armed forces, retaking large portions of territory occupied by Russia since the early stages of the conflict.</p> <p>If Anonymous' latest claims are proven to be true, it could leave the reservists open to social engineering attacks and potentially being contacted by Ukrainians.</p> <p>Hacktivist group Anonymous has launched numerous cyber-attacks against Russia in support of Ukraine during the conflict. Immediately following the start of its invasion on February 24, 2022, it declared a "cyber war" against Vladimir Putin's government.</p> <p>In March, the group claimed to have breached the database of the Russian federal agency responsible for the supervision of communications, information technology and mass media, leaking over 360,000 files in the process. In the same month, the group also hacked streaming services and TV news channels in Russia to broadcast footage of the war in Ukraine.</p> <p>Cyber has played a significant role in the Russia-Ukraine war, with Russia believed to be behind numerous attacks against the Ukrainian government and critical services in the build up to and since the invasion began. It has also targeted countries that have provided humanitarian and economic support to Ukraine.</p> <p>Despite Russia's perseverance, Ukraine's cyber-defenses have proven resilient and robust in the face of these threats. Commenting in a recent Infosecurity Magazine article examining the cyber aspects of the war in Ukraine, Craig Terron, global issues team at Recorded Future's Insikt Group, stated: "Partly why we haven't seen those massive attacks is because Ukraine's cyber defense has been strong with some support from the West and NATO."</p> <p>Outside of Ukraine, Western government organizations have warned corporations to bolster their cyber defences with cyber-attacks expected to be used as a Russian retaliation tactic in the face of severe sanctions.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/26 Ransomware affiliates adopt destruction
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/ransomware-affiliates-adopt-data/
GIST	<p>Ransomware affiliates appear to be dabbling with new data destruction capabilities in a bid to evade detection, increase their chances of getting paid and minimize the opportunities for the development of decryptor toolst.</p> <p>A new report from US security companies Cyderes and Stairwell reveals analysis of Exmatter-like malware. Exmatter is a .NET-based exfiltration tool often used by BlackCat/ALPHV ransomware affiliates.</p>

However, in this version of the tool, the attacker attempts to corrupt files in the victim's system following exfiltration, rather than encrypt them as usual.

"First, the malware iterates over the drives of the victim machine, generating a queue of files that match a hardcoded list of designated extensions. Files matching those file extensions are added to the queue for exfiltration, which are then written to a folder with the same name as the victim machine's hostname on the actor-controlled server," Cyderes explained.

"As files upload to the actor-controlled server, the files that have been successfully copied to the remote server are queued to be processed by a class named 'Eraser.' A randomly sized segment starting at the beginning of the second file is read into a buffer and then written into the beginning of the first file, overwriting it and corrupting the file."

There are several advantages to the affiliate group of using such tactics.

First, using legitimate file data to corrupt other files might appear more "plausibly benign" to security tools, and therefore helps to bypass heuristic-based detection for ransomware and wipers.

Second, if the group is able to exfiltrate all of a victim's files and then corrupt the existing ones, they have more bargaining power when it comes to extortion. It means the affiliates have the only remaining copy, and would not need to pay the ransomware developers a cut of the ransom, as no encryption is used.

Third, they don't need to worry about vulnerabilities in the ransomware code itself, which may otherwise allow defenders to build decryption tools.

"With such a robust copy of the victim business's data collected, encrypting the same files on disk becomes a redundant, development-heavy task compared to data destruction," argued Stairwell.

"These factors culminate in a justifiable case for affiliates leaving the RaaS model to strike it out on their own, replacing development-heavy ransomware with data destruction."

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HEADLINE	09/23 Australia 2 nd -largest telecom firm breach
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/optus-data-breach-australia-telecom-firm/
GIST	<p>Australia's second-largest telecommunication firm, Optus, is the latest cyberattack victim, which Sydney-based tech analyst Trevor Long has regarded as the biggest breach of personal data from an Australian firm.</p> <p>Optus Hack Details</p> <p>On Thursday, Optus confirmed that its customers' private data could be compromised in this attack since the attackers managed to access the customer identity database and opened it to other systems through the Application Programming Interface (API). The investigation is still ongoing, but Optus believes one of the networks was exposed to a test network with internet access.</p> <p>According to the official press release, the information potentially exposed includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Names• Addresses• Dates of birth• Phone numbers• Email addresses• Driver's license• Passport numbers. <p>The company suspects intruders scraped the consumer database and possibly copied one-third of it. Optus also stated that its network was accessed from an external source. As soon as it discovered the attack, it</p>

	<p>shut down the attack before customers could suffer any harm. However, the company did advise its customers to keep tracking their accounts for unusual or fraudulent activities.</p> <p>Optus CEO Kelly Bayer Rosmarin was asked if human error was responsible for the breach at a media briefing to which she responded:</p> <p>“I know people are hungry for details about the exact specificity of how this attack could occur, but it is the subject of criminal proceedings and so we will not be divulging details about that.”</p> <p>The CEO added that Optus boasts strong cyber defenses and has invested heavily in this regard, so if it can become a target of a security breach, it should be a wake-up call for all organizations.</p> <p>However, Optus has denied the involvement of human error in this data breach that impacted millions of customers. The CEO also apologized to the company’s customers and said it was challenging to offer immediate advice unless the investigation was completed.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/25 ‘Metador’ lurks in ISP networks for months
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/new-hacking-group-metador-lurking-in-isp-networks-for-months/
GIST	<p>A previously unknown threat actor that researchers have named 'Metador' has been breaching telecommunications, internet services providers (ISPs), and universities for about two years.</p> <p>Metador targets organizations in the Middle East and Africa and their purpose appears to be long-term persistence for espionage. The group uses two Windows-based malware that have been described as "extremely complex" but there are indications of Linux malware, too.</p> <p>Researchers at SentinelLabs discovered Metador in an telecommunications company in the Middle East that had already been breached by about ten other threat actors originating from China and Iran, among them Moshen Dragon and MuddyWater.</p> <p>Analysis of the malware and the infrastructure did not reveal clues to attribute Metador with sufficient confidence, one characteristic of the group being that it is "highly aware of operations security."</p> <p>SentinelLabs notes in their report that Metador is "managing carefully segmented infrastructure per victim, and quickly deploying intricate countermeasures in the presence of security solutions."</p> <p>The researchers discovered the new threat group after the victim organization deployed Singularity, SentinelOne's extended detection and response (XDR) solution months after Metador compromised its network.</p> <p>Thus, details about the initial infection vector are not available. The two Windows-based malware frameworks, dubbed ‘metaMain’ and ‘Mafalda’, run in only in system memory, leaving no unencrypted trace on the compromised host.</p> <p>The custom implants were decrypted and loaded in memory through "cdb.exe," the debugging tool in Windows - used in this attack as a LoLBin (living-off-the land binary) - to decrypt and loading in memory the two custom ‘metaMain’, and ‘Mafalda’, two custom Windows malware frameworks.</p> <p>Mafalda is a versatile implant that can accept up to 67 commands, while its multi-layered obfuscation makes it difficult to analyze in detail.</p> <p>The commands include file operations, reading contents of directories, manipulate the registry, reconnaissance of the network and the system, and exfiltrating data to the command and control (C2) server.</p>

Mafalda is likely developed by a dedicated team of authors, as SentinelLabs saw comments in the code addressed to the operators.

The metaMain implant is used for more “hands-on” operations, like taking screenshots, performing file actions, logging keyboard events, and supports arbitrary shellcode execution.

While the CBD approach was used in the observed case to initiate the execution flow, metMain supports additional methods described in greater detail in SentinelLabs' [technical report](#).

By digging deeper, the analysts found indications of a custom implant used for internal network bouncing named ‘Cryshell’ and an unnamed Linux tool that steals data from workstations and channels them back to Mafalda.

SentinelLabs isn’t sure if Cryshell and the Linux implant are different but underscore a difference in the port-knocking and handshake procedure during authentication with Mafalda, pointing to two distinct tools.

The custom implants and strict segmentation of the attack infrastructure (using a single IP address per victim and malware build) makes tracking Metador particularly challenging.

Combined with the use of malware that runs entirely in memory and LoLBins, this allows the threat actor to stay hidden on victim networks for long periods without raising the suspicion of a compromise.

However, despite these difficulties, SentinelLabs' investigation revealed that some metaMain samples dated since late December 2020, according to the timestamp in the execution log.

Moreover, the complexity of the malware and its active development point to a well-resourced group that can improve the tools further.

The researchers also found that the developers had documented the malware frameworks and provided "guidance for a separate group of operators."

Clues in the language used indicate that the developers are fluent in English, each with their indiosyncrasies; however the developer team is likely to have non-native English speakers. Spanish was also present in the code for Mafalda, referencing the homonymous cartoon in Argentina.

Based on the documentation for Mafalda's commands, it appears that a dedicated team develops the malware and a different group is operating it.

Linguistic and cultural breadcrumbs are insufficient for clear attribution in this case. However, SentinelLabs researchers theorize that behind Metador is "a high-end contractor arrangement," like one typical for a nation-state operation.

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HEADLINE	09/25 Ransomware data theft tool reveals shift?
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/ransomware-data-theft-tool-may-show-a-shift-in-extortion-tactics/
GIST	<p>Data exfiltration malware known as Exmatter and previously linked with the BlackMatter ransomware group is now being upgraded with data corruption functionality that may indicate a new tactic that ransomware affiliates might switch to in the future.</p> <p>The new sample was spotted by malware analysts with the Cyderes Special Operations team during a recent incident response following a BlackCat ransomware attack and later shared with the Stairwell Threat Research team for further analysis (Symantec saw a similar sample deployed in a Noberus ransomware attack).</p>

While [Exmatter](#) has been used by BlackMatter affiliates since at least October 2021, this is the first time the malicious tool was seen sporting a destructive module.

"As files upload to the actor-controlled server, the files that have been successfully copied to the remote server are queued to be processed by a class named Eraser," [Cyderes said](#).

"A randomly sized segment starting at the beginning of the second file is read into a buffer and then written into the beginning of the first file, overwriting it and corrupting the file."

This tactic of using data from one exfiltrated file to corrupt another file might be part of an attempt to evade ransomware or wiper heuristic-based detection that could trigger when using randomly generated data.

As Stairwell threat researchers found, Exmatter's partially-implemented data destruction capabilities are likely still in development given that:

- There is no mechanism for removing files from the corruption queue, meaning that some files may be overwritten numerous times before the program terminates, while others may never have been selected.
- The function that instantiates the *Eraser* class, named *Erase*, does not appear to be fully implemented and does not decompile correctly.
The second file's chunk length, which is used to overwrite the first file, is randomly decided and could be as short as one byte long.

Switch to data corruption to keep all the money?

This data corruption feature is an interesting development, and while it may also be used to evade security software, researchers at Stairwell and Cyderes think it may be part of a shift in the strategy used by ransomware affiliates.

Many ransomware operations run as a Ransomware-as-a-Service, where operators/developers are in charge of developing the ransomware, payment site, and handling negotiations, while affiliates join to breach corporate networks, steal data, delete backups, and encrypt devices.

As part of this arrangement, the ransomware operators receive between 15-30% of any ransom payment, and the affiliates receive the rest.

However, ransomware operations have been known in the past to introduce bugs that have [allowed security researchers to create decryptors](#) that help victims recover files for free.

When this happens, the affiliates lose out on any potential revenue they would have received as part of a ransom payment.

Due to this, the researchers believe that this new data corruption feature could be a new shift from traditional ransomware attacks, where data is stolen and then encrypted, to attacks where data is stolen and then deleted or corrupted.

Under this method, the affiliate gets to keep all of the revenue generated from an attack, as they don't need to share a percentage with the encryptor developer.

"Affiliates have also lost out on profits from successful intrusions due to exploitable flaws in the ransomware deployed, as was the case with BlackMatter, the ransomware associated with previous appearances of this .NET-based exfiltration tool," Cyders added.

Destroying the sensitive data after exfiltrating it to their servers will prevent this from happening and will most likely also act as an additional incentive for victims to pay the ransom demands.

	<p>"Eliminating the step of encrypting the data makes the process faster and eliminates the risk of not getting the full payout, or that the victim will find other ways to decrypt the data," Cyders said.</p> <p>This might be why we're seeing exfiltration tools in the process of being upgraded with in-development data corruption capabilities that would likely allow RaaS affiliates to remove the ransomware deployment part in their attacks to keep all the money for themselves.</p> <p>"Additionally, for each extorted payment received, the operator would retain 100% of the ransom payment, as opposed to paying a percentage to the RaaS developers," concluded Stairwell threat researcher Daniel Mayer.</p> <p>"These factors culminate in a justifiable case for affiliates leaving the RaaS model to strike it out on their own, replacing development-heavy ransomware with data destruction."</p>
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HEADLINE	09/23 Microsoft Exchange Servers targeted
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/application-security/cyberattackers-compromise-microsoft-exchange-servers-malicious-oauth-apps
GIST	<p>Attackers are deploying malicious OAuth applications on compromised cloud tenants, with the goal of taking over Microsoft Exchange Servers to spread spam.</p> <p>That's according to the Microsoft 365 Defender Research Team, which detailed this week how credential-stuffing attacks have been launched against high-risk accounts that don't have multifactor authentication (MFA) enabled, then leveraging unsecured administrator accounts to gain initial access.</p> <p>The attackers were subsequently able to create a malicious OAuth app, which added a malicious inbound connector in the email server.</p> <p>"These modifications to the Exchange server settings allowed the threat actor to perform their primary goal in the attack: sending out spam emails," the researchers noted in a blog post on Sept. 22. "The spam emails were sent as part of a deceptive sweepstakes scheme meant to trick recipients into signing up for recurring paid subscriptions."</p> <p>The research team concluded that the hacker's motive was to spread misleading spam messages about sweepstakes, inducing victims to hand over credit card information to enable a recurring subscription that would offer them "the chance to win a prize."</p> <p>"While the scheme likely resulted in unwanted charges to targets, there was no evidence of overt security threats such as credential phishing or malware distribution," the research team noted.</p> <p>The post also pointed out that a growing population of malicious actors have been deploying OAuth applications for various campaigns, from backdoors and phishing attacks to command-and-control (C2) communication and redirections.</p> <p>Microsoft recommended implementing security practices like MFA that strengthen account credentials, as well as conditional access policies and continuous access evaluation (CAE).</p> <p>"While the follow-on spam campaign targets consumer email accounts, this attack targets enterprise tenants to use as infrastructure for this campaign," the research team added. "This attack thus exposes security weaknesses that could be used by other threat actors in attacks that could directly impact affected enterprises."</p> <p>MFA Can Help, but Additional Access Control Policies Required</p> <p>"While MFA is a great start and could have helped Microsoft in this case, we have seen in the news recently that not all MFA is the same," notes David Lindner, CISO at Contrast Security. "As a security</p>

	<p>organization, it is time we start from 'the username and password is compromised' and build controls around that."</p> <p>Lindner says the security community needs to start with some basics and follow the principle of least privilege to create appropriate, business-driven, role-based access control policies.</p> <p>"We need to set appropriate technical controls like MFA — FIDO2 as your best option — device-based authentication, session timeouts, and so on," he adds.</p> <p>Lastly, organizations need to monitor for anomalies such as "impossible logins" (i.e., login attempts to the same account from, say, Boston and Dallas, that are 20 minutes apart); brute-force attempts; and user attempts to access unauthorized systems.</p> <p>"We can do it, and we can greatly increase the security posture of an organization overnight by tightening our authentication mechanisms," Lindner says.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/23 Malicious apps with millions of downloads
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/malicious-apps-millions-downloads-apple-google-app-stores
GIST	<p>The threat actors behind a newly discovered malicious advertising app operation have been active since at least 2019, but researchers tracking their evolution report the group has become more sophisticated, expanding beyond its previous Android-specific attacks into the iOS ecosystem.</p> <p>The latest campaign, according to researchers with Human Security's Satori research team, included 80 Android Apps lurking in the Google Play store and, notably, 9 in the Apple App Store. All together, the team reported the malicious applications were downloaded at least 13 million times.</p> <p>Once downloaded, the malicious applications spoof other apps to rack up digital ad views, play hidden ads the user couldn't see to gain fraudulent views, and even track legitimate ad clicks to hone the group's ability to fake them more convincingly later.</p> <p>The research team, which flagged the apps for removal from the official stores, calls this latest iteration of the attack group Scylla. The earliest version of the group was called Poseidon, then Charybdis. Scylla is the third wave of attacks from the threat actors, the Human team explained in their report.</p> <p>"Today's announcement of the disruption of Scylla — named after the granddaughter of Poseidon — reflects a new evolution from the threat actors behind the scheme," the Human team said about the find. "While the Poseidon and Charybdis operations centered wholly on Android apps, the Satori team has found evidence that Scylla additionally targets iOS apps and has expanded the attack to other parts of the digital advertising ecosystem."</p> <p>Human Security worked with Google and Apple to remove the malicious applications and is continuing to work with advertising software development kit developers to mitigate the campaign's fallout.</p> <p>"These tactics, combined with the obfuscation techniques first observed in the Charybdis operation, demonstrate the increased sophistication of the threat actors behind Scylla," the Human team added. "This is an <i>ongoing</i> attack, and users should consult the list of apps in the report and consider removing them from all devices."</p>
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HEADLINE	09/23 Darkside group new ransomware, tools
SOURCE	https://www.techrepublic.com/article/colonial-pipeline-ransomware-group-using-new-tactics-to-become-more-dangerous/?web_view=true

GIST

The ransomware known as Darkside gained a level of infamy in May of 2021 when it was used in a devastating attack against Colonial Pipeline, a company responsible for delivering oil and gas across the East Coast. Now the cybercriminals behind Darkside are using new ransomware with new tools and tactics that make them even more of a threat.

What is Coreid?

In a [report published Thursday](#), security firm Symantec detailed the latest activities and methods used by Coreid to victimize organizations with ransomware. Also known in some circles as FIN7 or Carbon Spider, Coreid is a ransomware-as-a-service (RaaS) operation that develops ransomware tools and services and then collects money from affiliates who use these tools to carry out the actual attacks.

After the [Colonial Pipeline incident](#) brought undue attention to [Darkside](#), its creators rebranded their offering as BlackMatter, allowing them to continue business as usual without the publicity surrounding the Darkside name. But in November of 2021, the [group shut down its BlackMatter operation](#) in response to pressure from law enforcement officials. However, the operation quickly resurfaced, this time using the name Noberus to describe its ransomware offering. And it's Noberus that poses a greater threat with more sophisticated tools and technologies.

How Noberus is more dangerous than other ransomware

First seen in November of last year, Noberus boasts several features designed to highlight its superiority over other types of ransomware. To challenge its victims and law enforcement, Noberus offers two different encryption algorithms and four encryption modes, any of which can be used to encrypt stolen files from a victim. The default encryption method uses a process called "intermittent encryption" to encrypt data quickly and securely yet at the same time avoid detection.

To extract the stolen files, Noberus uses a tool called Exmatter, which Symantec says is designed to steal specific types of files from selected directories and then upload them to the attacker's server even before the ransomware is deployed. Continually being refined and enhanced, Exmatter can exfiltrate files via FTP, SFTP (Secure FTP) or WebDav. It can create a report of all the exfiltrated files processed. And it can self-destruct if run in a non-corporate environment.

Noberus also is capable of using info-stealing malware to grab credentials from [Veeam backup software](#), a data protection and disaster recovery product used by many organizations to store credentials for domain controllers and cloud services. Known as Infostealer.Eamfo, the malware can connect to the SQL database in which the credentials are stored and steal them through a specific SQL query.

Money-making affiliates who use Noberus to carry out attacks also pose a greater threat due to the tools at their disposal. While Coreid will get rid of affiliates who aren't generating enough money, they'll reward those who prove profitable. Any affiliate who brings in more than \$1.5 million gains access to DDoS attack tools, files for phone numbers of victims to contact them directly, and free brute force attack methods against specific systems.

"In most ways, this report simply reinforces the fact that while there are a few monolithic 'full stack' cybercrime gangs, many players in the cybercriminal ecosystem are specialized into different functions," said Chris Clements, VP of Solutions Architecture for Cerberus Sentinel. "There are initial access brokers reselling footholds into networks, ransomware as a service developers that build the tools to escalate privileges, exfiltrate data, and launch mass encryption operations, and their customers who leverage those toolsets to extort victims."

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HEADLINE	09/23 APT41 continues to target healthcare sector
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/threat-intelligence/apt41-spear-phishing-supply-chain-campaigns-target-pharma-healthcare?web_view=true

GIST

A new Department of Health and Human Services [Cybersecurity Coordination Center alert](#) warns the healthcare sector is continuing to be targeted by APT41, a Chinese state-sponsored threat actor group actively tracked by researchers since 2012.

APT41 has a history of targeting the healthcare sector, as well as the pharmaceuticals and high-tech industries, among others.

The group makes frequent use of spear-phishing, water holes, supply chain attacks, and backdoors to gain access to the network for learning insights into the specific industry and gathering data to inform future attacks. There's evidence to believe the group has also been using keylogging screenshots, connecting to and querying SQL databases, code injection, downloading files, and stealing clipboard data.

To establish a foothold, [APT41 uses various public and private malware](#) and escalates privileges through custom tools to steal credentials. Once obtained, the actors use the credentials to perform internal reconnaissance then move laterally through stolen credentials, weak RDP, adding admin groups, and brute-forcing utilities.

By relying on backdoors, the group is able to maintain its presence on the victim's network and is known to create a RAR archive for exfiltration and removal of evidence.

Chinese-backed threat group's activity increased over recent years

Despite indictments of multiple group members in 2019 and 2020, the group's activities don't appear to have been slowed down by the actions as APT41 was highly active last year.

Notably, in 2020 amid the height of the pandemic, the healthcare sector faced unprecedented sophisticated campaigns from both domestic and foreign threat actors. [At the time, Congress asked](#) the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency to develop guidance to support HHS with guidance, naming APT41 as the actors behind the largest campaigns.

The campaign was targeting vulnerabilities in popular networking equipment, cloud software, and IT management tools, given the over-reliance on the tech for telehealth and telework during the COVID-19 response. The "Chinese espionage campaign" targeted nonprofit healthcare and pharmaceutical companies, as well as other organizations responding to the pandemic.

At the time, the letter to CISA warned the APT41 campaign also appeared to reflect a broader escalation from Chinese groups.

By 2021, APT41 added new tactics to its arsenal that were conducted in four different campaigns against private sector and government entities. Specifically, the group began using SQL injections for the initial attack vector, in addition to uploading Cobalt Strike beacons in smaller portions. A total of 13 organizations were confirmed victims of APT41 last year.

Previous campaigns launched against healthcare between 2014 to 2019 included IT and medical device software, medical device information, a biotech company, and a cancer research facility. In 2020, the campaigns worked to exploit Citrix, Cisco, and Zoho endpoints. More than 75 customers were targeted through these methods.

The most recent campaigns leverage the Unified Extensible Firmware Interface (UEFI) firmware implant, or the "most advanced implant found 'in the wild.'" It's implanted on the SPI flash motherboard memory to deploy additional malware with highly sophisticated methods.

APT41 also successfully exploited the web-based Animal Health Reporting Diagnostic System (USAHERDS) application via a [zero-day vulnerability](#) found in the app and [via Log4j attacks](#). The app is designed to solicit and manage animal health and disease data to influence the health status of animal populations.

	<p>Two zero-day attacks were used to exploit the USAHERDS app between May 2021 and February 2022. The alert notes that “one CVE was accessed by using a MachineKey and the other was from Log4Shell.” The investigation is ongoing, but at least six U.S. state governments were compromised. It’s believed there are more unknown victims.</p> <p>The HC3 white paper contains detailed tactics and popular tools used by APT41, which includes the Mitre ID for security leaders to review. Given the high success rate and longevity of the group, the insights can support effective mitigation strategies.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/24 New anti-hacking strategy: trust no one
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/cyberattacks-hacking-lapsuss-zero-trust-okta-uber-rockstar-11663969967?mod=hp_lista_pos5
GIST	<p>The companies that should know best how to fight hackers, tech firms, have reached an arresting conclusion: The weakest link in security, as it’s been since the Trojan War, is humans.</p> <p>Increasingly, they are taking a new approach: Trust no one.</p> <p>The philosophy, known as zero-trust architecture, assumes that no matter how robust a company’s external defenses are, hackers can get in. So companies need to make sure that even users inside a network can’t do serious damage.</p> <p>This past week, Uber and the Rockstar Games unit of videogame company Take-Two Interactive Software each disclosed major hacks that disrupted their operations. They joined a list of victims this year that includes some of the most technologically adept companies on the planet, such as identity-verification companyOkta and chip giant Nvidia.</p> <p>What many of these hacks have in common is that they succeeded by tricking a person in or close to the target company into giving up network-access credentials or other critical information, a technique known as social engineering. In the Uber case, for example, a contractor whose phone was being spammed by automatically generated access requests triggered by a hacker finally approved one, the company said. Other examples involve bogus “phishing” emails that hoodwink employees into sending login credentials to attackers.</p> <p>The hacks at the two companies, which declined to discuss their approach to security, are increasing the push for zero-trust within their peer group. Zero-trust is a broad concept, but at base it means that no part of a company’s IT systems should assume that any other part—human or software—is who or what it claims to be. All systems are assumed to be compromised by hackers already.</p> <p>As big and well-resourced companies have gotten better at protecting against purely technical exploits of their systems, these social-engineering attacks have become more popular, say cybersecurity experts and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. It is, after all, easier to upgrade a computer than the human mind.</p> <p>Moats aren’t enough</p> <p>In the traditional approach to cybersecurity, “We just built a giant moat around the castle, and once you breached that moat, you were in,” says Boe Hartman, a former chief technology officer at Goldman Sachs, where he led the team that built the consumer-banking infrastructure that made possible Apple’s credit card and its vaunted privacy features.</p> <p>This kind of perimeter security made sense at a time when corporate networks consisted mainly of PCs that were physically connected in an office building—or, if they were off-site, to a virtual private network, or VPN.</p> <p>These days, a staggering variety of devices, employees and outside contractors connect to corporate systems, in an ever-larger panoply of ways, from personal mobile devices and home computers to cloud</p>

services and internet-of-things devices. Today, relying solely on protection of every device and account that might connect to a company's systems isn't just difficult, but frequently disastrous, since attackers have to breach only a single gate to get access to the whole kingdom.

At Uber, the attacker used the commandeered contractor account to access internal systems, posting a message on a companywide Slack channel and taking over an account used to communicate with security researchers. Uber had to temporarily suspend access to internal communications systems. A representative declined to comment beyond [a Monday statement](#) that said the company had found no indication the hacker accessed user accounts or the databases Uber uses to store sensitive user information.

Every component of a system should be skeptical that you are who you say you are and are doing what you should be doing.

The zero-trust approach seeks to limit such havoc. "Zero trust is based on the idea that you don't trust anything in your system anymore," says Anshu Sharma, chief executive of Skyflow, a startup that uses zero-trust principles to safeguard personal data for other companies. "Just because you're in the building, you don't get access to important stuff."

Many of the design principles that guide engineers building zero-trust systems are easy to understand. If you've found yourself having to log back into corporate systems or your bank's website more often of late, that's a version of the zero-trust tactic of regularly "rotating" the credentials that allow people and computers to access other systems. The idea is that even if attackers got in with your account, they'd have limited time to do damage.

Another zero-trust principle, known as behavioral analysis, is that software should monitor the behavior of those on a network and flag anyone doing something unusual, like trying to make an extra-large bank withdrawal. (This is the same kind of analysis that leads your bank to send you a text if you make an out-of-character credit-card purchase, for example, when you're traveling to a new city.)

The consistent theme is that every component of a system should be skeptical, even if you've identified yourself and gained access, that you are who you say you are and are doing what you should be doing.

Zero-trust systems can create friction for users and employees, because security is always a balance between giving people the access they need and demanding that they prove their identity. This is also by design, a concept known as the "principle of least privilege," or giving people access only to the things they need, when they need them, and no more. But it runs counter to the priorities of many businesses, which are focused more on maximizing the efficiency of their operations than securing them.

A decade of zero-trust

While many businesses are only now adopting true zero-trust systems, the security industry has been talking about the trust problem for well over a decade.

One company that realized early on that walls and moats were no longer adequate protection was Google. It learned the hard way; starting in 2009, coordinated attacks by hackers associated with the Chinese government [attempted to penetrate](#) the Google-hosted email accounts of Chinese human-rights activists, The Wall Street Journal reported.

Soon after, Google began implementing its version of zero-trust systems, which it called [BeyondCorp](#). A spokeswoman says its approach applies to all parts of an IT system—users, devices, applications, and services, regardless of ownership or physical or network location. All those elements are treated with the same inherent suspicion. The shift actually makes it easier for employees to work from anywhere, without a VPN, she adds.

Naturally, Google also [turned it into a product](#) that can be used by companies which pay for its cloud services.

There are numerous other consultants and vendors happy to teach zero-trust principles, or sell systems built with them. Okta specializes in zero-trust human identity-verification systems. (The fact that Okta itself has recently become a hacking victim demonstrates how hackers can get past the “borders” of company security—even at companies that specialize in security.) [Zscaler](#) does the same for access for software and devices. [Palo Alto Networks](#) helps build zero-trust networks. The list goes on. Yet businesses—including big, sophisticated tech companies—continue to suffer losses of proprietary data, source code and customer information.

Rome wasn’t rebuilt in a day

Creating a top-to-bottom zero-trust architecture for a company’s existing IT infrastructure requires commitment from its most senior leaders, and can ultimately necessitate what is essentially a gut renovation of its systems, says Mr. Hartman, now co-founder of Nomi Health, a healthcare startup.

Months before it was attacked, Nvidia, the highest-valued U.S. semiconductor company, announced a tool called [Morpheus digital fingerprinting](#), to run on Nvidia hardware. It uses artificial intelligence to analyze hundreds of billions of user actions a week and flag instances when a user appears to be doing something unusual and potentially high-risk. For example: A user who normally works in [Microsoft](#) Office is suddenly trying to get access to the tools and repositories where company source code lives.

So Nvidia knew a thing or two about zero trust. Yet in March, its systems were compromised—likely, as [my colleagues reported this week](#), by Lapsus\$, the same group of young hacker-pranksters that struck Uber and others. Afterward, CEO Jensen Huang said the incident was [a wake-up call](#) and vowed to accelerate Nvidia’s embrace of zero-trust architecture.

Rolling out this system isn’t without its downsides, including how it can limit the productivity of engineers who all want as much access as possible. Striking a balance between security and accessibility means constant conversations between security teams and the employees they serve, says Justin Boitano, vice president of enterprise computing at Nvidia. It helps, he adds, that Mr. Huang was forthright after the March attack, and “employees seem to understand that we live in a new world now, and potentially there are bad people living on your network.”

Okta, which also was likely hit in March by Lapsus\$, said in a blog post [tallying the aftermath](#) of that breach that the company had come out much better than initially feared by its own engineers. According to a forensic report prepared by an outside cybersecurity firm, the attacker was in its systems for only 25 minutes, viewed and took screenshots of two customer accounts, and was unable to log in directly to any customers’ Okta accounts or make any changes to internal systems.

Okta now requires subcontractors, like the one that was breached, to use zero-trust security architectures, and all of them must demonstrate that they have the same level of security in their systems that Okta has in its own, says a company spokesman. Okta touts its own systems as zero-trust, and the company credits its zero-trust architecture with preventing hackers from getting any further into its systems than they did.

Microsoft says a Lapsus\$ attack on its systems in March breached only one account and was quickly detected and dealt with, and didn’t lead to any leaks of customer data. Vasu Jakkal, the company’s corporate vice president of security, says the lack of damage was a result of Microsoft’s own internal zero-trust architecture.

Without such architecture, an attacker can, on average, move from gaining access to a system to entering sensitive parts of it in just over an hour, Ms. Jakkal adds. The number of attempted identity-based cyberattacks continues to grow, due to better-resourced hackers and automated tools.

“Attacks can come from anywhere, from anyone, and be done to anyone,” says Ms. Jakkal. “There’s no company, no matter how big or small, who are not vulnerable to attacks.”

Adopting a zero-trust approach means changing many layers of security. Those include adding multifactor authentication on company accounts, and giving users and systems the least access they actually need. It’s

	<p>also a good idea to put the most sensitive data in one place and protect it vigorously, rather than sprinkling it throughout a company’s databases. (Consolidating sensitive data in one protected place is precisely what Skyflow, Mr. Sharma’s startup, does.)</p> <p>The breadth of changes means that companies rebuilding old systems need to set priorities, says Mr. Hartman, starting with protecting their crown jewels—source code, other intellectual property, customer information, and the like. Later, they can work through other parts of their systems. The scale of the challenge explains, in part, why only 22% of companies have implemented multifactor authentication—such as biometrics, push notifications or device-based authentication, in addition to a password—even though it is one of the best front-line cyber defenses for access, says Ms. Jakkal.</p> <p>Even proponents acknowledge that zero-trust is no silver bullet, in no small part because it takes so much time and effort to make it a reality. But in a world where regulators, shareholders and customers are all ready to hold companies and their leaders accountable for hacks and data breaches, and attackers are more resourceful and aggressive than ever, companies might not have much choice. They have to commit to making themselves less vulnerable.</p> <p>“The new world is, you’ve got to assume there are always going to be bad people on your network,” says Mr. Boitano of Nvidia. “And the question is how do you protect your resources and the intellectual property of the company.”</p>
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HEADLINE	09/23 FDA warns: ‘NyQuil chicken’ dangerous
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/verify/nyquil-sleepy-chicken-tik-tok-challenge-dangerous-fda-warns/536-7a302f5a-3fd9-4329-af96-936a1d19849b
GIST	<p>A bizarre social media trend dubbed “NyQuil chicken” or “sleepy chicken” appears to be making the rounds online, prompting questions and warnings from many people.</p> <p>As early as 2017, posts shared on Reddit show people cooking chicken in the cough and cold medicine, sometimes referring to it as “sleepytime” or “bedtime” chicken. It’s unclear why these videos gained popularity on social media, but they made their way onto TikTok in 2021.</p> <p>Now, the purported “challenge” is trending again on social media. It’s clearly a stomach-turning stunt meant to generate views. But is cooking chicken in NyQuil actually dangerous, like some people online claim?</p> <p>THE QUESTION Is cooking chicken in NyQuil dangerous?</p> <p>THE SOURCES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) • Kelly Johnson-Arbor, M.D., medical toxicologist and co-medical director with the National Capital Poison Center • Karla Robinson, M.D., a family physician in North Carolina • Piedmont Healthcare • Cleveland Clinic <p>THE ANSWER Yes, cooking chicken in NyQuil is dangerous.</p> <p>WHAT WE FOUND The FDA warned people that the social media videos encouraging people to cook chicken in NyQuil or other similar cough and cold medications sound “silly and unappetizing,” but can also be “very unsafe” – whether someone is eating the chicken or just cooking it.</p>

Since people in many of the videos use an entire bottle of NyQuil or more, large amounts of the medication could be absorbed into the chicken while cooking, Kelly Johnson-Arbor, M.D., medical toxicologist and co-medical director with the National Capital Poison Center, [says](#). Alcohol, which is an ingredient in liquid NyQuil, could also evaporate during the cooking process, making the medication more concentrated.

“The thought is that if you are boiling the medication that you could potentially boil away the water contents or the liquefying contents that helped to dilute the medication,” Karla Robinson, a family physician in North Carolina, previously [told VERIFY sister station WCNC](#).

Many formulations of NyQuil contain acetaminophen, dextromethorphan and doxylamine. If someone ingests too much of any of these ingredients, they could become very ill or die, according to Johnson-Arbor.

Acetaminophen is a pain reliever and fever reducer that is safe when taken in recommended doses, but too much of the drug can cause liver damage and even death.

Some early [symptoms of acetaminophen](#) overdose include cramping, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, stomach pain, sweating and vomiting. Worsening symptoms include an enlarged liver, pain in the upper right side of the abdomen and urinating less than normal.

Dextromethorphan, a cough suppressant, can cause heart palpitations, agitation and even hallucinations if a person takes too much of it. An overdose of the drug can also lead to a potentially life-threatening drug reaction called “serotonin syndrome,” which [results from having too much of the chemical in the body](#).

Serotonin syndrome can cause diarrhea or nausea, or more severe symptoms such as a high fever or seizures. The drug reaction can be fatal if it’s not recognized and treated quickly.

Doxylamine is an antihistamine that can cause sleepiness, dizziness and a rapid heart rate in high doses. A decongestant that is used in cough and cold medications like NyQuil can also result in high blood pressure, headaches and heart attacks if a person takes too much of it, Johnson-Arbor says.

But cooking chicken in NyQuil also poses health risks even if a person doesn’t eat it, the FDA warns.

“Inhaling the medication’s vapors while cooking could cause high levels of the drug to enter your body. It could also hurt your lungs,” the FDA writes on its website. “Put simply: Someone could take a dangerously high amount of the cough and cold medicine without even realizing it.”

Robinson said people should always use medicine according to the instructions on its label or based on a doctor’s advice.

“There are guidelines as to how the medication is supposed to be used. The label is very clear on the dosing, administration routes, and how in fact we are to use the medication,” Robinson said. “And any time you alter that, you run the risk of either being exposed to higher than expected levels of the medication or maybe even rendering the medication ineffective.”

Anyone who experiences adverse reactions after using cough and cold medicine can contact the Poison Control center [online](#) or via phone at 1-800-222-1222. Both options are free and available 24 hours a day.

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HEADLINE	09/23 Online incel movement violent, extreme
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/09/22/incels-rape-murder-study/
GIST	The most prominent forum for men who consider themselves involuntarily celibate or “incels” has become significantly more radicalized over the past year and a half and is seeking to normalize child rape, a new report says.

The report, by the Center for Countering Digital Hate's new Quant Lab, is the culmination of an investigation that analyzed more than 1 million posts on the site. It found a marked spike in conversations about mass murder and growing approval of sexually assaulting prepubescent girls.

The report also says that platforms including YouTube and Google, as well as internet infrastructure companies like Cloudflare are facilitating the growth of the forum, which the report said is visited by 2.6 million people every month. "These businesses should make a principled decision to withdraw their services from sites causing such significant harm," the report says.

"This is a novel, new violent extremist movement born in the internet age, which defies the usual characteristics of violent extremist movements that law enforcement and the intelligence community are usually used to," said Imran Ahmed, founder and CEO of CCDH, a US-based nonprofit. "Our study shows that it is organized, has a cogent ideology and has clearly concluded that raping women, killing women, and raping children is a clear part of the practice of their ideology."

Incels blame women for their failings in life. The term originated decades ago, and while the first incel forum was founded by a woman in the mid 1990s, incel communities have since become almost exclusively male. Incel ideology [has been linked](#) to dozens of murders and assaults over the past decade, the most prominent one involving Elliot Rodger, a 22-year-old self-described incel [who murdered six people](#) in a stabbing and shooting rampage in Santa Barbara, Calif., in 2014. Before killing himself, he posted a long manifesto and YouTube videos promoting incel ideology.

In March, the U.S. Secret Service's National Threat Assessment Center [released a report](#) warning that anti-woman violence was a growing terrorism threat.

According to the CCDH analysis, members of the forum post about rape every 29 minutes, and more than 89 percent of posters support rape and say it's acceptable. The CCDH analysis also found that posters on the forum are seeking to normalize child rape. More than a quarter of members of the forum have posted pedophilia keywords, the analysis found, and more than half of the members of the forum support pedophilia.

The forum also changed its rules this year to accommodate what appears to be a trend toward normalizing rape of younger victims, according to the report. The forum previously implored users not to "sexualize minors in any way, shape or form," but in March changed that language to "do not sexualize prepubescent minors in any way, shape, or form."

The report also cited content that reflected the trend toward pedophilia, noting that a majority of commenters voiced support for a post that read, "As an incel, there is literally no reason to be against pedophilia." Another thread started by a regular user who had posted more than 7,000 times to the forum contained an image of a 12-year-old child with the comment "who in their right mind would prefer a 22 year old [woman] to this?"

"Analysis of their discourse shows this core group poses a clear and present danger to women, other young men, and reveals an emerging threat to our children," the report says.

CCDH said its analysis also had found a rising interest in mass murder on the site. Posts mentioning incel mass murders increased 59 percent between 2021 and 2022, the study said, and praise was common for Elliot Rodger. The word "kill" was mentioned 1,181 times on the forum in just one month, equivalent to once every 37 minutes. "Shoot" and "murder" are also popular words on the forum.

"We are in no doubt after conducting this study that this community of angry, belligerent and unapologetic men are dangerous to each other, with malignant social dynamics whereby they encourage each other to worse and worse extremes," the report said. "Unchecked, incel communities have the potential to radicalize further."

The CCDH said it is making its full database of the forum available to law enforcement and has briefed counterterrorism officials in the U.S. and the U.K. about the report's findings.

The forum was founded in 2017 by Diego Joaquín Galante, known online as "Sergeant Incel" and Lamarcus Small as a response to Reddit banning the subreddit /r/incels. It offers an invitation-only Discord server for its members who have posted more than 400 times to the site, and an active channel on the chat app Telegram. Moderators of the forum also maintain a Twitter account that promotes incel ideology and attacks perceived critics.

Galante and Small declined to comment. Cloudflare did not respond to a request for comment.

Only self-declared heterosexual men are permitted to post on the forum; women and members of the LGBTQ community are prohibited from weighing in.

The report says the forum has gained a mass audience largely through social media, singling out YouTube in particular, where, it said, videos promoting incel ideology have been viewed a total of 24.2 million times. "YouTube is a key part of incel education," Ahmed said.

Forum members, the report said, often share content from misogynist YouTube channels and channels like Incel TV, which promotes incel ideology. Another popular YouTube channel mentioned on the forum, the report said, is SlutHate Creeps, where users post covertly recorded images of women.

"We remove content that targets or threatens individuals or groups based on protected attributes. Upon review, we removed and age-restricted several videos surfaced by CCDH for violating our Community Guidelines," said YouTube spokesman Jack Malon in a statement.

YouTube isn't the only inroad, the analysis found. Galante and Small have created a network of seemingly more mainstream websites that funnel people to the incel forum. Google searches for body image or unemployment frequently return links to these "incelosphere" sites, the CCDH found.

Teenage boys are among the forum's most active and extreme users, according to the CCDH. In one instance, a boy who said he was 17 was recorded as being on the forum for an average of 10 hours per day during the period of the report, posting an average of 40 times per day, the report said. Another, who claimed to be 15, spent an average of five hours per day on the site, posting repeatedly about his desire to commit a mass shooting.

The forum enables their participation, the analysis said, by encouraging users to hide the site from prying parents or teachers by using a feature that disguises it as a banana marketing website.

The report criticizes Cloudflare, an internet services company that provides services to the forum and to other Galante and Small sites. Cloudflare recently dropped Kiwi Farms, a forum where users coordinated harassment campaigns against women and members of the LGBTQ community, after a protest launched targeting its mainstream clients. "Cloudflare is profiting from its role as an infrastructure provider to all four incelosphere forums and has been praised by the incel forum's official Twitter account," the report says.

The CCDH urged government regulators also to find ways to combat incel ideology and restrict the site. "This should not be left to the goodwill of Big Tech, who profit from the creation and spread of this content and are not properly incentivized or required to be proactively transparent on the key metrics or to invest in the desired safety outcomes," the report says.

"This forum is a violent ideological manifesto, but for the 21st century," Ahmed said. "Instead of being a book, it's essentially a wiki that is continuously being evolved by the readers themselves. Left alone, this community has been radicalized further and their ideology is becoming more dangerous by the day."

HEADLINE	09/23 US expands rules to Iranian internet access
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/23/us-iranians-internet-state-surveillance-protests-mahsa-amini
GIST	<p>The US Treasury Department on Friday issued guidance expanding the range of internet services available to Iranians despite US sanctions on the country, amid protests around Iran after the death of a 22-year-old woman in custody.</p> <p>Officials said the move would help Iranians access tools that can be used to circumvent state surveillance and censorship, but would not entirely prevent Tehran from using communications tools to stifle dissent, as it did by cutting off internet access for most citizens on Wednesday.</p> <p>“As courageous Iranians take to the streets to protest the death of Mahsa Amini, the United States is redoubling its support for the free flow of information to the Iranian people,” Deputy US Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo said.</p> <p>“With these changes, we are helping the Iranian people be better equipped to counter the government’s efforts to surveil and censor them.”</p> <p>Adeyemo added that Washington in coming weeks would continue to issue guidance.</p> <p>Public outrage in Iran over Mahsa Amini’s death last week showed no sign of abating after days of protests in Tehran and other cities, with protesters torching police stations and vehicles earlier on Thursday and reports of security forces coming under attack.</p> <p>Amini, a Kurdish woman, was arrested by the morality police in Tehran for wearing “unsuitable attire” and fell into a coma while in detention. The authorities have said they would investigate the cause of her death.</p> <p>Internet monitoring group NetBlocks on Thursday said a new mobile internet disruption has been registered in Iran, where access to social media and some content is tightly restricted. NetBlocks reported “near-total” disruption to internet connectivity in the capital of the Kurdish region on Monday, linking it to the protests.</p> <p>Washington has long provided some internet-related exceptions to its sanctions on Iran, but Friday’s update to the general license seeks to modernize them, the Treasury said.</p> <p>The new license includes social media platforms and video conferencing and expands access to cloud-based services used to deliver virtual private networks (VPNs), which provide users with anonymity online, and other anti-surveillance tools, according to a Treasury official who briefed reporters on the license on condition of anonymity.</p> <p>The license also continues to authorize anti-virus, anti-malware and anti-tracking software, the Treasury said, and removes a previous condition that communications be “personal” to ease compliance for companies.</p> <p>Asked how the expanded license would help Iranians if their government again shuts down internet access, a State Department official also briefing reporters said Iran’s government would still have “repressive tools for communication.”</p> <p>The new license makes it “easier for the Iranian people to confront some of those oppressive tools,” the official said. “It doesn’t mean that they don’t exist anymore.”</p> <p>SpaceX CEO Elon Musk responded to a tweet from Secretary of State Antony Blinken about the new license on Friday with the comment “Activating Starlink,” a reference to the firm’s satellite broadband service – already provided to Ukraine for its fight against Russia’s invasion.</p>

	<p>Musk said on Monday his company would provide Starlink to Iranians, and would ask for a sanctions exception to do so.</p> <p>The Treasury official briefing reporters said Starlink’s commercial-grade system, which would involve sending hardware into Iran, would not be covered by the general license.</p> <p>“That would be something that they would need to write into Treasury for,” the official said.</p>
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Terrorism, Extremism

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HEADLINE	09/25 DHS probe extremist violence video games
SOURCE	https://boldtv.com/matthew-hirsch/2022/09/25/dhs-to-investigate-extremist-violence-in-video-games/
GIST	<p>The Department of Homeland Security received nearly \$700,000 to investigate extremist groups using video games to radicalize youth. The grant is part of the Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention program, which aims to assist and develop “innovative solutions” to combat domestic terrorism. Here’s everything you need to know about the Department of Homeland Security grant to investigate extremist violence in video games.</p> <p>Terrorism and violence in video games</p> <p>The Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey Center on Terrorism, Extremism, and Counterterrorism will study extremist indoctrination in games. The \$699,763 grant will fund the development of best practices for evaluating and preventing terrorist activities.</p> <p>“Game developers in general-from small, independent studios to billion-dollar multinational corporations-have lagged in awareness of how extremists may attempt to exploit their games, and how their communities can be targeted for radicalization,” reads the grant summary page.</p> <p>As a result, the program will also develop a series of workshops for developers on detecting and preventing extremist exploitation in games. They will also work with community managers, multiplayer designers, lore developers, and mechanic designers.</p> <p>Extremist groups using games in the past</p> <p>In September 2021, the BBC reported extremist groups used games such as Minecraft and Call of Duty to indoctrinate youth. Their tactics involve normalizing radical ideals in everyday conversation and then moving the dialogue into private spaces such as Telegram. In addition, the BBC found these groups made custom Roblox and Minecraft maps to mimic Nazi concentration camps for extremist roleplaying.</p> <p>Furthermore, in December 2021, the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism held a panel discussing radical indoctrination through online video games. The conference featured two parts, the first examining how and why extremists use online video games to indoctrinate youth. The second discussed potential counter-terrorism tactics to prevent these situations.</p> <p>Additionally, in 2014, Forbes reported the extremist group ISIS used the Playstation 4’s party chat to plan a Paris attack. Belgium’s then federal home affairs minister, Jan Jambon, said it’s harder to keep track of the gaming service than Whatsapp.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/24 Frontex: 118 suspects linked to terrorists
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/border-security/joint-border-operation-identifies-118-people-suspected-of-terrorist-organization-affiliation/
GIST	Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, and the Spanish National Police have wrapped up this year’s operation Minerva. Officers from 22 European countries and their Spanish colleagues managed

to identify 118 people suspected of being affiliated with terrorist organizations. They also seized 11 stolen cars and 160 kg of hashish

The operation takes place each year over the summer months to support border checks in the Spanish ports of Algeciras, Tarifa and Ceuta, which are handling summer passenger traffic to and from Morocco. The joint teams handle thousands of passengers and vehicles during the busiest summer days.

On average, more than 100 Frontex standing corps officers assisted Spanish authorities with checking the people crossing the borders. Among them, dog handler teams specialized in looking for people trying to cross the border hidden in vehicles played a particularly important role.

Urmas, a Frontex standing corps officer, shared his experience from this year's operation:

"The traffic is high at this time of year – about half of all the yearly external border crossings in Spain happen during the three summer months. We checked two to three million people in this summer operation and had several drug seizures or detections of stolen cars.

"The biggest seizure we had was towards the end of the operation, in Tarifa – the officers discovered 139 kilograms of hashish after they got alarmed by the smell when checking the car's trunk. Part of the car had to be practically taken apart to get to the compartment.

"Another interesting case took place in June. The joint teams discovered 7.5 kilograms of hashish in a truck. But it wasn't because of the dog – he simply knew where truck drivers often hide contraband, and he checked this place just in case. This is a great example of harnessing the knowledge and experience acquired over the years – an invaluable factor in all missions."

The Frontex support included officers checking vehicles, people and passports, together with experts in stolen vehicles and in identification of fraudulent documents. Frontex also provided dog handler teams to help detect hidden people, drugs and other illegal goods.

As in all joint operations coordinated by the agency, Frontex officers worked under the command of the host country authorities. The main goal of Minerva is to strengthen border security, cooperation among participating authorities, and identify threats to EU's security.

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HEADLINE	09/23 Iceland rocked by 'first terror attack plot'
SOURCE	https://www.euronews.com/2022/09/23/four-arrested-as-iceland-rocked-by-first-terror-attack-plot
GIST	<p>Four suspects have been arrested over alleged plans for a terrorist attack in Iceland, say police.</p> <p>Several semi-automatic weapons -- some 3D printed -- were seized from nine different locations, along with a large quantity of ammunition, computers, telephones and digital media.</p> <p>Violence is extremely rare in the tiny European country, which has topped the Global Peace Index since being included in its rankings in 2008.</p> <p>Police said four Icelanders in their 30s were arrested in Kopavogur, a suburb of the capital Reykjavik, and the southwestern town of Mosfellsbær in a massive operation involving around 50 men on Wednesday. Two of them were remanded in custody on Thursday, and the other two were released.</p> <p>"The origin of yesterday's police operations (...) is part of an investigation into the preparation of a terrorist attack," Karl Steinar Valsson, Iceland's national police commissioner, told reporters.</p> <p>While the motives are still unknown, the targets would be "various institutions" and "citizens of the state", according to Valsson, possibly including parliament and the police themselves.</p>

	<p>Police said they were investigating whether there were links between the men and extremist organisations and were in contact with foreign authorities - with a focus on possible connections with extremist groups in other Nordic countries.</p> <p>“As far as we know, this is the first time that such an investigation has been launched (in Iceland),” Valssoon said.</p> <p>There are an estimated 106,000 guns held by civilians in Iceland - about one for every three people - and most of the weapons are rifles and shotguns rather than handguns.</p> <p>Armed crime is rare and the country has strict gun laws: there have only been 52 gun deaths in the last decade that statistics are available, and 50 of them were suicides, according to figures compiled by the Gunpolicy.org database at the University of Sydney.</p> <p>In February there was an incident in Reykjavik where the gunman also used a 3D printed weapon. In 2013 a man was shot dead after firing on officers, the first time police had shot and killed anyone in Iceland.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/25 Somalia suicide bombing at military base
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/suicide-bombing-somalia-kills-one-soldier-injures-six-2022-09-25/
GIST	<p>MOGADISHU, Sept 25 (Reuters) - One soldier was killed and at least six others injured in Somalia on Sunday when a suicide bomber blew himself up at a military base in the west of the capital Mogadishu, a soldier and a hospital worker told Reuters.</p> <p>The suicide bomber had disguised himself as a regular soldier and joined others as they filed into a military base early Sunday before he detonated the explosive, Captain Aden Omar, a soldier at the base told Reuters.</p> <p>"We lost one soldier and several others were injured. The bomber blew up himself at a check point," he said.</p> <p>A nurse at Madina Hospital in Mogadishu told Reuters they had received one dead soldier and six others who were wounded.</p> <p>It was not immediately clear who had carried out the attack but Islamist group al Shabaab frequently carries out bombings and gun attacks in Somalia and elsewhere.</p> <p>The al Qaeda-allied group wants to topple Somalia's central government and establish its own rule based on its own strict interpretation of Islamic sharia law.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	09/25 Aircraft dispatchers working from home
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/25/business/remote-airline-dispatchers.html
GIST	<p>Millions of people boarded flights this summer, eager for an escape more than two years into a stifling pandemic. What many may not have realized is that at least some of the dispatchers who planned and managed those flights — mapping out routes, monitoring weather forecasts and more — were doing the job from home.</p> <p>Two years ago, the Federal Aviation Administration allowed a handful of airlines to let some aircraft dispatchers work remotely to keep travel running smoothly as coronavirus cases ran rampant. Two carriers, Republic Airways and SkyWest Airlines, which operate flights for the largest U.S. airlines, took</p>

the agency up on the offer. But critics say it is long past time to end that practice, arguing that it exposes dispatchers to disruptions and distractions, shields them from oversight and raises concerns about flight safety.

“This dispatch-from-home concept takes all the controls away,” said Gary Peterson, the air division director of the Transport Workers Union, which represents tens of thousands of airline workers, including dispatchers at Republic. “Taking people out of the operation like they’re doing, it’s insanity.”

Dispatchers typically work from secure facilities known as airline operations centers. There, they play a crucial role, sharing operational authority over flights with pilots. Dispatchers put together comprehensive flight plans, charting routes, accounting for weather and turbulence, and ensuring that a given plane is ready and safe to fly. If an emergency arises or weather patterns change, they work with pilots to adjust course or address any problems.

Since first allowing dispatchers at some airlines to work remotely in the summer of 2020, the F.A.A. has expanded the policy, permitting as many as 60 percent of the dispatchers at Republic to do so. SkyWest allows remote work when local coronavirus cases are high or when the airline deems it necessary, the F.A.A. said. United Airlines was also given the option, but hasn’t used it.

SkyWest did not say how many dispatchers it employed, while Republic said it employs more than 80. The Transport Workers Union, which has fought the F.A.A. on the remote working practice since the beginning, estimated that about eight Republic dispatchers work from home on a typical day, managing about 150 flights. (The SkyWest dispatchers are not unionized.)

The union and other critics say that while the number of dispatchers working remotely is limited, the practice sets a dangerous precedent. The Airline Dispatchers Federation, a national advocacy group composed of working dispatchers, and many experts say the job should be done only from the secure confines of an operations center.

Those facilities serve as nerve centers where dispatchers typically work from desks with three or more monitors to track a range of information that could affect air travel — weather, flight status maps, F.A.A. notices and even broadcast news. Operations centers have strict measures to protect physical security and cybersecurity and are equipped with high-speed internet access and backup generators that can keep the facilities running for days or weeks. Some are blast-resistant and built to withstand extreme weather, such as hurricanes and tornadoes.

Such protections are impossible to replicate remotely, experts said. At home, internet speeds are typically slower and distractions are harder to limit. If a dispatcher falls ill or is unresponsive at home, colleagues may not notice for some time. There are also concerns about substance abuse: Dispatchers are subject to random drug and alcohol tests at work. At home, such tests can be harder to carry out.

“We have the safest air system in the world,” said Catherine Jackson, the president of the Airline Dispatchers Federation and a longtime dispatcher for Southwest Airlines. “Why are we even considering making compromises?”

Both Republic and SkyWest defended the practice, saying that safety remains a top priority and that they have worked closely with the F.A.A. to ensure that dispatchers who work remotely are held to high standards.

“We have worked with our dispatchers and the F.A.A. to fully leverage the latest advancements in technology and develop procedures, training, redundancy and oversight that ensure we are meeting strict safety requirements,” Republic said in a statement.

Both airlines fly typically short routes for American Airlines, Delta Air Lines and United. SkyWest also flies for Alaska Airlines. Together, they carried nearly 53 million passengers within the United States last

year, according to federal data. SkyWest carried about 6 percent of all passengers on domestic flights, while nearly 3 percent flew with Republic.

Like Republic, SkyWest defended the safety of the practice and said in a statement that remote work accounted for a “very small” portion of its dispatching operation. The airline also said that the practice had been “essential and effective in ensuring the health and safety of our dispatch team as well as our flight operations throughout the pandemic.”

Mr. Peterson of the Transport Workers Union acknowledged that some of the union’s members may want and enjoy the option to work from home. But, he said, the union took a hard stance against the practice because it can put dispatchers at risk. If a dispatcher gets in trouble for something that happened while working remotely, the union may have a harder time mounting a defense, he said.

“That’s our No. 1 concern in expressing this to the membership — you’re putting yourself on an island,” he said. “That license in your back pocket, that’s you. When something goes wrong, you’re the one that’s in front of an administrative law judge, you’re the one that’s going to jail, you’re the one that lives with the consequences.”

In a letter to the F.A.A. this summer, Mr. Peterson provided what he said were two examples that showed how remote dispatching can undermine safety. In one, which he said occurred in May, a Republic pilot could not reach an assigned dispatcher for 30 minutes while the pilot was stuck flying over Albany, N.Y., because of bad weather. In another, a dispatcher at Republic’s operations center worked well beyond the F.A.A.-mandated maximum 10-hour shift because the dispatcher’s replacement was having trouble connecting to the internet.

Billy Nolen, the acting F.A.A. administrator, responded in an Aug. 31 letter, saying that the agency had investigated those concerns and found that “Republic complied with regulatory requirements for operational control.” Mr. Nolen also said that the agency had reviewed drug and alcohol testing records for both airlines since 2020 and could not find evidence to support the union’s claim that remote dispatchers were being excluded from testing.

Mr. Peterson called that response “nothing more than damage control.”

Since 2018, the F.A.A. has required all airlines to maintain a safety management system, a comprehensive set of procedures to monitor and respond to safety risks, the agency said. It plans to revisit the remote work authorization for both airlines early this winter.

Like many jobs in aviation, dispatching is highly regulated. Anyone interested in the profession must take at least 200 hours of instruction and pass an F.A.A. exam. Some become certified as part of a four-year college education in aviation, while others do so after a few weeks or months of dedicated instruction at a private school.

“I just heard somebody over the summer describe the dispatcher in this way I loved: The dispatcher is the pilot who doesn’t actually fly, they’re the mechanic who doesn’t actually fix the plane, and they’re the operations scheduler who doesn’t actually do that part of the job,” said Brian Strzempkowski, the interim director of the center for aviation studies at Ohio State University. “They have to know all the little different pieces and parts about the whole operation.”

Dispatchers often start their career at a smaller airline, like Republic or SkyWest, with the aim of moving on to one of the major carriers, which typically pay better. A dispatcher can expect to make more than \$100,000 annually within a few years of joining a major airline like American, Delta or United, Ms. Jackson of the dispatchers federation said. There are nearly 3,200 dispatchers nationwide, according to F.A.A. records.

As with remote work in other professions, there are benefits to allowing at least some dispatchers to work from home, including a better work-life balance, the airlines and some dispatchers said. Remote work

	<p>could also allow a smaller airline to hire more dispatchers farther from its offices to spread out the work and lighten the load, some said.</p> <p>But to Ms. Jackson and others, there's only one good reason to entertain any change in how the job is done — and that is if it can improve flight safety.</p> <p>“When you can convince me that it is safer, then we can have a conversation,” she said. “I’ve yet to find someone who can come close to telling me it’s even as safe.”</p>
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HEADLINE	09/25 Drone delays Seahawks game
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/sports/seahawks/drone-delays-seahawks-game-tyler-lockett-leaves-briefly-with-crook-in-neck/
GIST	<p>For the second time in two days, a football game in Seattle was briefly delayed in the fourth quarter by a drone intruding just a little too close.</p> <p>Saturday, it was Washington's victory over Stanford at Husky Stadium that was stopped for a few minutes.</p> <p>Sunday, it happened again when officials stopped play with 6:42 remaining, with referee Tra Blake announcing there was a security situation and players had to leave the field.</p> <p>“All they told us was a drone,” said Atlanta coach Arthur Smith. “And I’ve probably read too many CIA fiction thrillers, maybe too many Brad Thor books. So I’m looking up, and they’re telling me to get over to the sideline, there’s a drone. Some interesting thoughts go through your head when they told us to go to the bench, but luckily nothing happened.”</p> <p>After about seven minutes, play resumed.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/25 Senegal ferry sinking deadlier than Titanic
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/25/world/africa/senegal-ferry-joola.html
GIST	<p>ZIGUINCHOR, Senegal — Up on the deck, dozens of university students played cards. In the first-class cabins below, passengers watched the movie “Air Force One.” In an overcrowded third-class compartment, a teenage soccer team on its way to a tournament belted out songs.</p> <p>All were aboard a ferry named the Joola when it set out 20 years ago on a 17-hour journey from a city in southern Senegal, along the west coast of Africa, headed for the capital, Dakar.</p> <p>As night fell, the festivities suddenly stopped. Rain began to drum on the Joola's deck, hundreds of passengers rushed inside, the ferry tilted left, and then it capsized — with most of the travelers trapped.</p> <p>More people died on the Joola on Sept. 26, 2002, than on the Titanic, making it the second deadliest maritime wreck ever recorded in peacetime. Only 64 people survived out of more than 1,900 — on a ferry designed to carry a maximum of 580. None of the 46 babies and toddlers on board survived.</p> <p>Yet after two decades, no one has been held accountable. Outside of Senegal, little is known about the Joola, and even in Senegal, many blame the bad weather or some uncontrollable force.</p> <p>Ousseynou Djiba, a mango seller who had been transporting his goods to market and cheered on the singing soccer team that day, is buying none of that.</p> <p>“Some claim that it was God's will,” Mr. Djiba, now a schoolteacher, said in the courtyard of his modest concrete home as his young children played soccer nearby. “How can it be God's will when there were so many human-made errors?”</p>

Survivors and families of victims, as well as multiple investigations, say that those responsible are the [Senegalese military](#), which operated the ferry; [government officials](#), who ignored countless warning signs; and the [country's top leaders](#), whose slow reaction meant that the first rescuers did not reach the Joola, stranded less than 90 nautical miles from Dakar, until 17 hours after it capsized. Many passengers were still alive, but rescuers lacked the equipment to save them.

Neither Senegal's navy, military or transportation ministry responded to multiple requests for comment. The survivors and victims' families are still fighting to have the boat raised so they can bury their loved ones. Four cemeteries hold more than 550 victims, but most remain 59 feet deep in the Atlantic.

"The swell has been hitting these souls for the past 20 years," said Elie Jean Bernard Diatta, whose brother Michel was the soccer coach who died with all his players. "They speak to us in dreams, and they ask for one thing only, to rest in peace underground."

Countries in Africa and Asia have experienced a series of horrific passenger ferry accidents in recent years, including [South Korea](#) in 2014, [Tanzania](#) in 2018 and [Cameroon in 2019](#).

But in Senegal, frequent accidents on small boats navigating the country's rivers and coastline lead many to ask if anything has changed since the Joola disaster.

When it began sailing in 1990, the 260-foot-long Joola was an answer to a fluke in Senegal's geography. The Casamance region, in the south, is separated from central and northern Senegal by Gambia, a thin strip of a country stretching from Senegal's coastal west to its center. The cheapest way for residents of Casamance to reach the capital, Dakar, and the rest of the country was either on a damaged road on the east or by sea on the west.

But Casamance had undergone a separatist rebellion, and attacks on the roads made the boat journey safer. In 1995, the military took over the Joola, saying it needed to check passengers' identities.

Yet the ferry was regularly overcrowded.

As it departed from Ziguinchor, Casamance's largest city, the Joola was already tilting.

To escape the hot, overcrowded rooms, many stayed on the upper deck, including dozens of students chatting, or flirting far from the eyes of conservative parents. They were returning to Dakar for fall semester since Casamance did not have its own university, which many blamed on the central government's discrimination against the region.

One of them was Ousmane Keita, a first-year geography student who knew the Joola well, having worked on the carved wooden boats that load merchandise onto the ferry.

"The journey was a good time to talk about October's exams and catch up with high school friends," Mr. Keita, now 45 and a soft-spoken father of two young children, said on a recent evening, lowering his voice as he recalled the events of that day.

As night fell, in the restaurant below, a singer impersonating Senegal's most famous musician, Youssou Ndour, was giving a concert.

But clouds and strong winds were approaching the Joola. Only one of its two engines was functioning, later reports found.

Mr. Djiba, the mango seller, had hoped to sleep pillowed on a pile of life jackets on the boat, but a guard dislodged him, so he went into the restaurant. More passengers, like Mr. Keita, rushed inside when rain started after 10 p.m.

As the Joola tilted sharply to the left, water poured in through some open portholes. The freight and vehicles in the garage, all loose, slid from starboard to port, and a large generator came untied, rocking the boat and plunging it into darkness.

People scrambled to cling to whatever they could. But some fell as the boat tipped steeply.

Mr. Keita, the geography student, tried to escape through a corridor leading outside, but the slope had become too steep. The Joola was filling with water. "When the boat was almost vertical, I swam upward," he said. "People were screaming, and suddenly they were silent. The water had submerged them."

Of the 450 students aboard the Joola that day, he was one of six who survived.

The ferry capsized within minutes off the coast of Gambia. Its 1,400 tons and four decks became a deadly trap.

In the restaurant, Mr. Djiba jumped out of a porthole and plunged into the ocean. He fought to cling onto the hull of the capsized ferry. But it was covered in algae and too slippery.

The water tasted like fuel oil. High waves kept tossing him off, swallowing other passengers one after another, their screams fading in the dark.

Then, from below, two hands grabbed Mr. Djiba's feet as he was losing his energy in towering waves. "I had to go underwater to get rid of him," he said. "At some point, he let go."

The life rafts and jackets Mr. Djiba had rested on were still tied on the upper deck, but were now 39 feet deep. Ismaila Ndaw, a retired diver from the Senegalese Navy who had overseen security on the Joola until a few days before it capsized, recalled in an interview that the life preservers had intentionally been tied tightly together so passengers could not take them.

"It was a mess: Any time there was a small incident, everyone would rush to take one," he said.

As Mr. Djiba drifted away from the wreck, he spotted a white shape bobbing toward him. It was one of the few loose life jackets, kept by military crew members in their cabins. A dead passenger was draped in it.

"I wanted to keep the body around me so we could bury it, but it slipped straight away," Mr. Djiba said. He clung to the life jacket.

About 20 passengers had managed to climb on to the hull and stayed there for hours, one said in an interview. They heard shouts from below: Passengers were alive in some air pockets that kept the boat afloat.

But no alarm had gone off, and no distress call had been sent to Dakar or Ziguinchor, investigations later found. Only around 7 a.m. did the authorities learn about the disaster from passing boats.

Even so, they took hours to react. The Senegalese Air Force did not send search-and-rescue aircraft until almost noon, according to a report by Senegalese investigators. Instead, fishing boats collected the first bodies and rescued the survivors.

Mr. Ndaw, the diver, was one of the first rescuers. When he reached the vessel in the afternoon and entered it from the restaurant, he faced hundreds of bodies, some still holding hands.

He made his way toward the bow and reached the first-class cabins, which were sealed and had not been flooded. There, some passengers waved their hands through the port windows. But Mr. Ndaw said they were not equipped with welding torches to pierce the hull, and opening the cabin doors would have caused the floating boat to sink.

None of the passengers that Mr. Ndaw saw alive in the cabins were saved, he said.

The order he had received, he said, was to recover the bodies, which he and his colleagues did over the following 10 days. He and other response team members, as well as the survivors, still suffer from depression and sleeping disorders. Mr. Ndaw compulsively scratches his nostrils, a tic he said he had developed “because of the smell.”

The welter of errors that led to the tragedy are by now well documented: the Joola didn’t have a sailing license; its crew never contacted the weather forecaster before setting off; the captain regularly failed to ensure that the ferry was balanced.

Yet a Senegalese prosecutor closed an investigation into the disaster a year later, deciding that only the captain — who died — was responsible. A judicial inquiry in France, where 18 victims were from, was dropped in 2014.

The authorities instead offered about \$15,000 in compensation to each survivor or victim’s family, on the condition that none sue the government.

Twenty years later, the city of Ziguinchor, which lost nearly 1,000 inhabitants on the Joola, has partly moved on. A university opened in 2007 to offer local students an alternative to one in Dakar. A new ferry replaced the Joola.

Mr. Keita tried to resume his geography studies after the calamity, but spent a month in a psychiatric unit. He relapsed on the sixth anniversary, when a government minister at a ceremony commemorating the event said, as Mr. Keita recalled, that it was time to “move on from this anniversary thing.”

Triggered, Mr. Keita threw himself in the nearby Casamance River, was rescued and hospitalized again. Now the owner of a cellphone shop, he has never traveled by sea or river again.

“I am not strong enough to deal with the boat yet,” he said.

A museum being built in Ziguinchor to memorialize the tragedy is still unfinished. Divers recently collected objects from the wreck to exhibit. In the cabins and in the boat, said Mr. Ndaw, the skeletons are still there.

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HEADLINE	09/24 Philadelphia PD logs crime to Disney World
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/sep/24/philadelphia-police-logged-crime-data-disney-world/
GIST	<p>Walt Disney World calls itself the “most magical place on Earth,” but it’s also been a criminal hotspot for years — if you go by data from the Philadelphia Police Department.</p> <p>For cases where the location of a crime could not be pinpointed, or in cases where an officer made a typo, the department would set the GPS data for the crime to Fantasyland, one of the regions of Walt Disney World’s Magic Kingdom theme park.</p> <p>No actual existing location in Philadelphia registered more crimes than Fantasyland. Over the past six years, over 5,000 crimes, including 298 auto thefts, 16 arsons, and 50 homicides were attributed to the park, according to WCAU-TV, a Philadelphia NBC affiliate.</p> <p>Mapping alternate coordinates on cases without a specific location is standard practice — the middle of the ocean is commonly used. Using Disney World for this purpose, however, is not normal.</p> <p>Former New York crime analyst supervisor Christopher Herrmann told Insider that “You don’t want that data to get out because then you can give Disney World a black eye. The preferred method would be to just put it in the middle of the ocean.”</p>

	<p>The Philadelphia Police Department says that Disney World was selected so as not to muddle crime data for the city.</p> <p>“In no way was this meant to be in any way humorous... It was just an innocuous location chosen within the U.S. that would obviously not have anything to do with Philadelphia whatsoever,” PPD Director of Research and Analysis Kevin Thomas told WCAU-TV.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	09/25 Calif. crackdown catalytic converter thefts
SOURCE	https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-09-25/newsom-signs-catalytic-converter-bills
GIST	<p>Gov. Gavin Newsom announced Sunday that he signed legislation to crack down on rampant vehicle catalytic converter theft by making it illegal for recyclers to buy the valuable car part from anyone other than the legal owner or a licensed dealer.</p> <p>Lawmakers this year introduced a suite of bills to address an alarming increase in brazen thefts of catalytic converters, the anti-pollution devices in cars that contain valuable metals such as rhodium, platinum and palladium. The often untraceable parts are easy to saw off from a vehicle, making them an attractive target for those hoping to make a quick buck at a scrap yard.</p> <p>The two new laws — Senate Bill 1087, by state Sen. Lena Gonzalez (D-Long Beach), and Assembly Bill 1740, by Assembly member Al Muratsuchi (D-Rolling Hills Estates) — will increase penalties for buyers who fail to certify that a catalytic converter wasn’t stolen.</p> <p>The laws should make it more difficult for thieves to find a marketplace for the parts. Scrap metal recyclers and junk dealers will have to document how they are buying catalytic converters and from whom, as a way to ensure they’re doing business only with owners and qualified sellers.</p> <p>“We’re going to get to the root cause, at least one of the root causes, in this crime. And that’s those brokers and those middlemen, who pay top dollar for stolen parts. It will now be illegal in California to buy catalytic converters from anyone other than licensed auto dismantlers or dealers,” Newsom said in a video statement. “You take away the market for stolen goods, you can help cut down on stealing.”</p> <p>States across the country have introduced new policies to combat the skyrocketing popularity of catalytic converter theft, worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic when car usage decreased and the value of certain metals increased.</p> <p>The National Insurance Crime Bureau reported an increase from 1,298 catalytic converter thefts in 2018 to 14,433 in 2020. California reported 18,026 catalytic converter thefts in 2021, according to the background check company BeenVerified.</p> <p>A stolen catalytic converter can generate \$25 to \$500, according to a 2021 report by the Congressional Research Service, and could cost an owner \$3,000 to replace the part. Among the most targeted vehicle types and models are the Ford F-Series, Honda Accords and Toyota Priuses.</p> <p>The new laws will require a traceable method of payment for the catalytic converters, and more stringent record keeping of purchases, including detailed information on the businesses selling the parts and the vehicles that they were taken from.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/25 ‘Murderapolis’ center defund police, crime
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SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/09/25/us/minneapolis-crime-defund-invs/index.html
GIST	<p>Marnette Gordon was doing laundry at home in Minneapolis one summer morning last year when a call came from her 36-year-old son.</p> <p>She figured her son, Telly Blair, was checking in to see if she wanted a soda from a gas station down the street, where he often went for fuel and snacks.</p> <p>“Mom, I’ve been shot,” he said. “Call the police!”</p> <p>Marnette, her other son Tamarcus and his 12-year-old daughter rushed to the gas station from their home in the city’s north side, a part of town long beset by violent crime.</p> <p>Blair’s family came upon his blue 1986 Chevy Caprice at pump No. 5 — beating police and paramedics by a few minutes, they said — only to find him slumped in his car, bleeding from multiple bullet wounds in his chest. A 17-year-old male in an orange hoodie had fired nine rounds from a handgun into Blair’s car before running off.</p> <p>While an off-duty nurse in scrubs who’d been at the gas station tried to stop his bleeding, Marnette — a heart-transplant recipient — couldn’t bear to watch and stood at a distance. Telly was her caretaker.</p> <p>“It was just horrible to see him sitting there, waiting on the ambulance,” she told CNN.</p> <p>The 12-year-old called 911 while watching her uncle struggle to breathe.</p> <p>“Oh my God, please,” the girl, who was crying, said to a dispatcher, according to 911 transcripts of the August 9, 2021 shooting obtained by CNN. “Hurry up, hurry up, hurry, hurry, he’s dead, hurry up!”</p> <p>Telly Blair was among 93 people who were murdered in Minneapolis last year, city crime data shows. That’s just a few shy of the total killings in 1995, when the city earned the nickname “Murderapolis.” (Neighboring St. Paul witnessed 38 murders last year — a historic high.)</p> <p>After the police murder of George Floyd in May of 2020, Minneapolis became a worldwide symbol of the police brutality long endured disproportionately by Black people. In a kind of Newtonian response, the city became the epicenter of the culturally seismic “Defund the Police” movement. But that progressive local effort fizzled with a decisive referendum last November.</p> <p>Now, with its police department under investigation by the Department of Justice, the city of 425,000 is trying to find a way forward amid a period of heightened crime that began shortly after Floyd’s death.</p> <p>That year, the number of murders soared to nearly 80 — dwarfing the 2019 body count of 46. It has cooled somewhat this year, though the amount of killing — and violent crime in general — remains elevated far above 2019 levels and homicides are on pace to surpass the 2020 figure. The reasons why are far from clear.</p> <p>KG Wilson, a longtime resident of the Twin Cities, said police withdrew from violent neighborhoods in the aftermath of Floyd’s killing — a common sentiment among locals.</p> <p>“The criminals were celebrating. They were getting rich,” he said. “They were selling drugs openly.”</p> <p>Wilson told CNN the violence devastated his own family: His 6-year-old granddaughter was killed in May of 2021 after getting caught in the crossfire of a gunfight in north Minneapolis. The culprit remains at large.</p> <p>Another factor was the pandemic, which some observers see as the biggest impetus for the crime surge.</p>

“It unsettled settled trajectories,” said Mark Osler, a former federal prosecutor who is now a professor at St. Thomas School of Law in Minneapolis. “Kids who were going to school, who would have graduated but drifted off because there is no school — we’re seeing a lot of the violent crime is by juveniles.”

Citing sinking morale in the wake of the unrest after Floyd’s killing, leaders at the Minneapolis Police Department say the officer head count has shrunk from 900 in early 2020 to about 560 in August — a loss of more than a third of the force.

Against this backdrop, the political pendulum on public-safety matters in this reliably liberal city — the “Mini Apple” hasn’t had a Republican mayor since 1973, and that was for just [a single day](#) — seems to have swung away from a progressive mindset towards the middle.

And on matters of public safety, the middle is where many of the city’s Black residents already were.

Last year, progressives touted a ballot measure that was said to be a referendum on the “defund” concept. Question 2, as it was known locally, would have replaced the Minneapolis Police Department with a new “public health-oriented” Department of Public Safety and removed a minimum staffing requirement from the city charter.

It failed in November, with 56% of voters rejecting it. That figure was 61% in north Minneapolis, a pair of neighboring city wards where Blacks make up a strong plurality of the roughly 66,000 residents. All but one of the 17 precincts in the north voted against the measure.

“We did not believe that the police should be defunded, but we do believe in police reforms,” said Bishop Richard Howell of Shiloh Temple, a north-side church founded more than 90 years ago.

Rae McKay-Anderson — Telly Blair’s sister — said “you can’t possibly defund the police in a way that’s going to benefit the Black community.”

Dealing the final blow to the local “defund” movement last year was a city council vote to essentially refund a cut they’d made the prior year. Mayor Jacob Frey is proposing another budget bump for the next two fiscal years.

The question of the moment is, if the police budget has been restored, and if all the anti-cop shouting by politicians and activists that left officers demoralized has weakened to a whimper, why are citizens — especially in the rough parts of north Minneapolis — still feeling neglected by police and fearful for their safety?

A feeling of lawlessness, a sense of neglect

Residents of the north side describe a landscape that can feel lawless. Indeed, about 60% of police calls for shots fired this year have come from the area, even though it makes up just 15% of the population, according to [city data](#).

Paul Johnson, 56, said young men openly sell drugs during the day in public places, such as a gas station on Broadway Avenue that has been [dubbed](#) the “murder station” due to all of the fatal shootings there. (It is near the one where Blair was killed.)

“You pull up to get gas – they try to sell you drugs,” he said. “And not just three or four, but it’s a bulk of people.”

The perception among many residents is that the police ignore the area.

“They just let it go on,” said Johnson’s friend, Brian Bogan, 42, who said he moved from north Minneapolis to relatively safer St. Paul due to his kids growing up in an area where they don’t know if “it’s fireworks or gunshots.”

While Minneapolis is far from the nation's most dangerous city, its rate of increase in homicides — the count in 2021 was about double that of 2019 — is among the highest in the nation, said Richard Rosenfeld, a criminologist at the University of Missouri- St. Louis and co-author of an annual study on [crime trends](#).

On per-capita murders, it has ranked fairly high — 19th out of 70 jurisdictions in the US — during the first half of this year, according to the Major Cities Chiefs Association. The city ranked even higher on other per-capita crime measures, such as robbery (4th), rape (8th) and aggravated assault (13th).

Juliee Oden, 56, can't even count the times she has called 911 to report gunfire outside her north-side home. One night last summer, a volley of shots jolted her out of bed while she was watching TV — it was coming from her front lawn.

"I hit the floor," she said. "My phone went flying. I had to crawl on my stomach to get to the phone" to dial 911.

It got to the point where it was hard to sleep at night and Oden, who works at a construction company, had colleagues install a bulletproof panel behind the headboard of her bed.

"Now I go in my room with complete confidence," she said. "If somebody is to shoot directly at my house, I know: As long as I'm behind my headboard, I'm 100% safe."

Oden was among eight residents in north Minneapolis who filed a lawsuit in the summer of 2020 calling on the city to replenish the police department by filling vacant positions. The suit singled out city council members who supported the "radical 'dismantle the police'" idea and accused them and Mayor Frey of creating a "hostile" environment for the police. It was largely upheld by a state Supreme Court [decision](#) this summer — meaning the city needs to staff up to at least 731 police officers.

Doug Seaton, an attorney representing the eight residents, said the successful suit was filed in direct response to how progressive city council members had embraced the "defund" idea. It demoralized the police department and ultimately led to a mass exodus of officers, he said.

"That is, we think, the major reason that crime has spiked throughout the city and hasn't gone away yet," Seaton said.

Meanwhile, as the MPD headcount has shrunk, wait times have grown for people who call 911 to report serious "priority 1" incidents, which can include shots fired, robberies, assaults and mental health crises.

Average 911 response times jumped the very month of Floyd's death — May of 2020 — from around 10 or 11 minutes early that year to 14 minutes, according to public records obtained by CNN. They kept rising in 2021 to 16 minutes; response times in the north side's fourth precinct last year actually surpassed 17 minutes, where they remain.

Some nights are so busy that the dispatchers are directed to hold all non-priority-1 calls citywide; these would include reports of property damage, suspicious persons or theft. That happened during a frenetic five-hour stretch on the night of September 8, when officers responded to multiple shootings and calls for shots fired — many of them in north Minneapolis; one near the "murder station" — that left two dead and seven wounded.

The Minneapolis Police Department has even flatly refused to respond to certain crimes in a timely manner. One couple who run a property management business recently took it upon themselves to investigate the theft of their van, box truck and tools by a culprit who brought the stolen goods into a homeless encampment on the north side, according to [local news reports](#).

Police told KARE 11 that the hostility towards police on the part of some encampment dwellers compels them to take a slower approach when investigating property crimes there.

But by and large, police officials have said the slower response times are the expected byproduct of a depleted force that has witnessed an overwhelming wave of retirements, resignations and disability leaves due to post-traumatic stress.

Much of that exodus owes to a bottoming out of morale in the wake of a crisis that left police officers feeling reviled, said interim Minneapolis Police Chief Amelia Huffman.

“There’s really been a very fundamental challenge to our sense of purpose in law enforcement,” Huffman said of the post-Floyd era. “(Minneapolis) is the eye of the storm. So all of those challenges and the pressure is magnified, you know, a hundred fold – a thousand fold.”

Similar [headcount plunges](#) have plagued police departments from coast to coast.

Some law enforcement officials have attributed the mass resignations and retirements to pandemic-related reasons, but Sgt. Betsy Brantner Smith of the National Police Association said morale is a major factor.

“It’s no secret that law enforcement ... especially in the last two and a half years, has been badly vilified and wrongly vilified,” she told CNN. “You can’t call an entire profession racist and expect people to just sit back and say, okay, you know, keep piling on.”

In June, the embattled Minneapolis department was hit with more bad press — this time for its abysmal numbers on unsolved murders in recent years.

Since 2016, the clearance rate (or the percentage of homicide cases closed) in Minneapolis sank from around 54% — the most recent national average — to 38% in 2020, according to the latest available data from the FBI. Figures for last year haven’t been released by the FBI, but Huffman insists the rate has improved considerably, claiming that the unofficial figure for this year to date is back to 54%.

Even so, some family members of murder victims say they have felt compelled to take a lead role in the homicide investigations of their own loved ones.

Residents take matters into their own hands

Among them is Dorothy Royston, a 26-year-old healthcare professional who said she spent weeks proactively feeding police information shortly after her unarmed younger brother, Charles Royston Jr., was gunned down on a snowy street in north Minneapolis on a January night in 2021, according to police reports.

“They had a lot of the information or the logistics of what was – like bullet casings and stuff like that,” Dorothy said. “But when it comes to who was involved with the actual shooting, who was around – and the people information? I actually provided that to the police.”

Dorothy provided CNN with text messages between her and a lead investigator on the case. In February of 2021, the investigator told her in a message that there would be a warrant out for the arrest of a suspect by the next day. He still hasn’t been arrested, Dorothy said.

She said communications from the investigator fell off around March of 2021.

A couple months ago, about a year and a half after the killing, Dorothy said, she called the investigator to ask for an update.

“He told me that he was currently doing something and that he would call me back,” she said. “He never called me back.”

(The investigator agreed to talk with CNN, but a police spokesperson called off the interview.)

Taken together, the current state of crime and policing in Minneapolis — from slow response times to recent [brutality complaints](#) to the poor clearance rates — has fostered an atmosphere of distrust.

The distrust paves the way for some to assume bad intentions. Dave Bicking, a board member of the Minneapolis-based Community United Against Police Brutality, goes so far as to suggest the police since Floyd's death may have engaged in a "sickout" — that is, that officers are purposefully sluggish to respond to or investigate certain crimes.

"It's still going on to a considerable extent — it was dramatic in the beginning," Bicking told CNN. "The police would simply, if they showed up at all, say, 'Oh, we don't have anybody to deal with that,' or 'You people don't want us here, so we're not going to do anything.'"

Bicking, who has been publicly critical of the "defund" tactic from the get-go, said he bases the sickout claim on a drop-off in jail bookings shortly after Floyd's death and on more than 2,300 interviews the CUAPB has conducted over the past year and a half with Minneapolis residents about their experiences with the MPD.

He added that the CUAPB persuaded the Department of Justice to include in its investigation of the MPD the alleged lack of Minneapolis police investigations into murders of people of color.

Chief Huffman did not respond to follow-up questions related to sickout allegations, but in her earlier interview with CNN she said Minneapolis has unique challenges.

For one, she said, Minneapolis has a relatively low rate of domestic murders, which are typically easier to solve, and a high rate of gang murders, which are more difficult.

But the bigger factor again comes down to attrition. Huffman said the Minneapolis Police Department has lost about 100 investigators in its investigations bureau since early 2020.

Still, Huffman said the MPD is committed to solving homicides, adding that unsolved murders can have serious negative repercussions that ripple through communities for years and devastate families.

"The lack of justice for families who have had family members murdered is completely unacceptable," she said. "And it's incumbent on us to make sure that we're doing everything we can to solve those cases."

Huffman's new boss, Cedric Alexander — who was hired in August as the city's first ever community safety commissioner — said he understands the community's frustration.

"When you have a body drop and another body drops and another body drops, what you have oftentimes is ongoing violence — it certainly does overwhelm an agency that already is struggling with a great deal of shortages," he told CNN. "It does give people the perception nothing is being done. But I can assure you that it is. And in any of these violent cases where we have victims, it is taken at a very high priority."

How 'defund' failed

In June of 2020, nine of the Minneapolis City Council's 13 members stood on a stage adorned with [an oversized sign](#) saying "DEFUND POLICE."

Around the same time, in another spectacle that made national news, Mayor Frey was booed and jeered by activists at a George Floyd protest near his home for saying — in response to a question — that he did not support "the full abolition of police." As he walked away, the crowd broke into a "Go home Jacob!" chant.

"It was a lonely walk," Frey told CNN recently. "At that moment there was a very loud chorus of people, including elected officials ... that were all calling very loudly to defund the police."

It's well established that those widely viewed events boosted a movement in Minneapolis that would later fail at the polls last November. Lesser known is how the very community most directly impacted by crime and policing in the city — the north side — was among the least supportive of the “defund” idea.

“I think what’s at issue is the White progressives’ belief that they’re helping us,” said Lisa Clemons, a former Minneapolis police officer, who is Black and runs a gun-violence organization called A Mother’s Love in north Minneapolis. “Oftentimes they are hurting us.”

Clemons said people in north Minneapolis don’t want to get rid of cops — “they just want respectful cops.”

Minneapolis voters not only resoundingly rejected what was seen as the “defund” initiative, they also voted to strengthen the office of the mayor and reelected Frey, who’d become a local avatar for moderate Democrats put off by the party’s most liberal wing.

The Minneapolis area with the largest Black population — Ward 5 on the north side — also proved a strong base of support for Frey in his reelection, according to a CNN analysis of voter data.

Frey said that while no demographic group is a monolith, White progressives in the aftermath of Floyd’s death often seemed out of sync with ordinary Black residents.

“I heard a lot of White activists purport to be speaking on behalf of communities of color. And I was listening to them — listening to communities of color — and they weren’t saying the same things,” Frey said. “I’d walk down the street and I’d hear from White people, ‘Defund the police! Defund the police!’ And then I’d hear from a Black person a half block later, ‘Hey, we really need to have some additional help.’”

Sheila Nezhad, a community organizer who turned out to be one of Frey’s most competitive mayoral opponents in November, noted that turnout was lower in north Minneapolis than the citywide average, and that the advocacy group — called [Yes 4 Minneapolis](#) — that proposed the ballot measure that came to be seen as the “defund” referendum was led by Black people.

“And I’m not White,” she said. “So when Jacob Frey talks about only White people want to defund or whatever ... I think that he is perhaps shaping the narrative to benefit his political goals.”

Even before Floyd’s killing, the MPD had drawn criticism for its approach to policing the Black community.

In 2016, anti-police protests erupted after it was announced that two Minneapolis officers involved in the shooting death of Jamar Clark — a 24-year-old Black man who scuffled with the officers and, according to authorities, reached for one of their guns — would not be charged. Two years later, after responding to calls of a man shooting a gun in the air, police chased and fatally shot 31-year-old Thurman Blevins, who said “please don’t shoot me” as he ran away from them; body cameras showed officers yelling at him to drop his gun. Police say Blevins turned with his gun toward the officers, who ultimately were [not charged](#).

And then came May 25, 2020. In a nine-minute video that seemed to last an eternity, a police officer defiantly knelt on the neck of a handcuffed, face-down Floyd, whose pleas for help went unanswered until he fell silent. Now infamous, the officer, Derek Chauvin — who’d already had 18 prior complaints filed against him — was convicted of Floyd’s murder and sentenced to 21 years in federal prison.

“For me, it was a moment of deep grief,” said Nezhad, who still wants to abolish the Minneapolis Police Department. “And the days that followed offered a glimpse into just how ready so many people are for massive change.”

In April, the Minnesota Department of Human Rights [released a report](#), two years in the making, charging that the Minneapolis department’s officers have engaged in a pattern or practice of race discrimination when conducting traffic stops or using force. It called for ordering a consent decree, which is essentially a

court-enforced settlement to reform the department. The report also blasted the MPD for “ineffective accountability,” saying that “almost every investigation of a police misconduct complaint against an MPD officer ... is assessed or guided by sworn MPD officers.”

The city is in negotiations with the human rights department over the consent decree, and Frey has indicated that some of his budget priorities are in [direct response](#) to the report.

Don Samuels — a former Minneapolis City Councilman who surprised political observers this summer by nearly defeating US Rep. Ilhan Omar, an icon of progressive politics in America — said the video of Floyd’s death was the most “evil thing I had ever seen.”

“That was so painful — just painful to watch and to see a Black man, of dark complexion, under the knee of a dispassionate White male,” Samuels said. “It conjured up all kinds of slavery imagery.”

And yet, Samuels, a 73-year-old immigrant from Jamaica — who lives in one of the most dangerous neighborhoods of north Minneapolis — experienced another kind of dismay when he saw the nine council members on the Defund stage while watching the news on TV with his wife.

“It was like a World Trade Center moment for us,” he told CNN. “Our jaws fell to the floor. Literally, we were aghast. We looked at each other and said, ‘Oh, my God. It’s going to be Crime City in Minneapolis.’”

That summer, Samuels joined the residents of north Minneapolis who sued the city for its police shortage. Half of the plaintiffs are Black.

During his campaign for Congress, Samuels ran a kind of middle-ground campaign on public safety. “We don’t have to choose safety or police – we can have both/and,” Samuels said at a town hall campaign event in August. “Let’s get rid of the bad police, let’s fix the fixable police.”

He lost, but the “both/and” approach appears to be the current path that the city of Minneapolis is on.

‘Both-and’: A post-Defund approach

On a morning this August, in a scene that offered a sharp contrast from two years ago — when Mayor Frey made his “lonely walk” through an angry crowd — he and Commissioner Alexander, both smartly dressed, strode triumphantly through corridors of City Hall.

Alexander, a 67-year-old former deputy sheriff with a doctorate in psychology who was hand-picked by Frey, had just been confirmed as the city’s community safety commissioner in a contentious council meeting. His newly created position amounts to the first piece of Frey’s [proposed plan](#) to combine 911, police, fire, neighborhood safety and emergency management under one roof.

“The number one, first priority is the fact that people in this community don’t feel that they’re safe,” said Alexander — who served on the 21st Century Task Force on Policing under former President Barack Obama — during an impromptu press conference minutes after his hiring. “The fact is that we have violent crime that’s occurring, and occurring way too frequently.”

Alexander, who [retired](#) in 2017 as the public safety director in DeKalb County, Georgia, in the metro Atlanta area, added that the MPD isn’t likely to become fully staffed overnight — “probably not even in our careers” — and stressed the importance of data-driven policing and building relationships.

“If we don’t build relationships with these people in our communities, you ain’t solving crime nowhere,” said Alexander, a former CNN contributor on law enforcement issues.

Osler, the St. Thomas professor, said at the moment, people don’t want to work for the MPD, “where officers are not respected. And to be straight-up about it, MPD earned that lack of respect.”

In the meantime, he said, the department needs to focus on two key metrics: improving homicide clearance rates and executing search warrants for violent criminals, which, Osler acknowledged, is no easy feat.

“Think about it from the perspective of the person executing that warrant,” Osler said. “You’re going to bust down the door and who you know is on the other side is someone who’s probably already shot somebody. That’s a tough job. No wonder people don’t want to do it.”

On the policy front, the wheels of change seem to be grinding forward, however slowly.

Since Gov. Tim Walz signed a police accountability law two years ago that banned chokeholds and “warrior” style police training, the city of Minneapolis appears to be finding a path forward that avoids having to choose between building the police force and reimagining public safety. The city is not only looking at further beefing up the police budget but is also piloting a slate of programs that send unarmed responders to nonviolent 911 calls. Mayor Frey has proposed making them permanent in his recommended budget for 2023-2024.

Frey argues that the centerpiece of his proposed public safety plan – creating a new Office of Community Safety — captures much of what the “defund” movement was after in the first place.

The concept is to “match the best possible people with what is actually being experienced on the street,” Frey said. “Anybody who was for that before but is not for it now is pretty disingenuous.”

When it comes to hiring, the MPD is trying to entice young blood with incentives — for instance by covering the cost of tuition for potential recruits who need law-enforcement coursework but only have a high school degree. It’s a big challenge — not just because so many officers have left, but also because there is a shortage of young people across the country getting into law enforcement, Alexander said.

The city has made headway when it comes to filling the top job: Frey recently [announced](#) three finalists — all of them from outside Minneapolis — for the permanent chief position, which Huffman has filled on an interim basis since December.

Last summer, the police presence in the city was so thin — and the rate of violence so high — that a group of volunteers in the faith community went to heroic measures to break the cycle.

The idea was simple. In an initiative called 21 Days of Peace, church volunteers simply hung out in some of the most deadly neighborhoods to engage in violence prevention.

The effort was considered a success, but for one volunteer it came at a cost.

Gloria Howard, a grandmother, had just handed out snow cones to two women with young children at one of the violence hotspots near a liquor store on Broadway Avenue when a barrage of gunfire sent people scattering.

Howard crumpled to the ground. When she tried to get up, she couldn’t — she’d been shot twice.

People from a nearby church rushed out of the building to render aid and call the police.

“When I got to the hospital, the doctors were like, ‘Well, you’re some lucky lady and you must be somebody special because you have no metal fragments in your body,’” Howard said. The bullets, she said, “went through and through.”

Howard, who was against the “defund” initiative, said there are specific reforms she would like to see, starting with a push to require more officers to live in the city they serve.

(A 2017 [Star Tribune report](#) found that just 8% of MPD officers lived in Minneapolis. Chauvin lived in the suburb of Oakdale, where nearly 72% of the residents are White.)

	<p>“All Black men are not big and scary,” Howard said. “All Black women are not angry. So, you know, you have to be able to know the community.”</p> <p>But she realizes that even with such reforms, improvement would take time.</p> <p>“I don’t even walk Broadway anymore,” Howard said, while eying the thoroughfare from a distance, close to where she was shot. “I’ve seen the cars speeding up and down when they’re chasing each other. And then when they start shooting, it can come from anywhere. So I don’t even do that anymore. And I never used to be afraid coming over here.”</p>
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HEADLINE	09/26 Russia school shooting: 13 dead, 21 injured
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/news/article/6-dead-20-wounded-in-school-shooting-in-Russia-17466652.php
GIST	<p>MOSCOW (AP) — A gunman killed 13 people, including seven children, and wounded 21 other people in a school in central Russia on Monday, authorities said.</p> <p>Russia's Investigative Committee said the shooting took place in a school in Izhevsk, a city about 960 kilometers (600 miles) east of Moscow in the Udmurtia region. Those wounded were 14 children and 7 adults, the Committee said.</p> <p>The governor of Udmurtia, Alexander Brechalov, said in a video statement that the still unidentified gunman shot himself.</p> <p>The school educates children between grades 1 and 11. It has been evacuated and the area around it has been cordoned off, the governor said.</p> <p>According to the Investigative Committee, the gunman wore a black t-shirt with “Nazi symbols.” No other details about the shooter or his motives have been released.</p> <p>Izhevsk, a city of 640,000, is located west of the Ural mountains in central Russia.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/26 Catching human traffickers in a hackathon
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/border-security/20-countries-spin-a-web-to-catch-human-traffickers-during-hackathon/
GIST	<p>Earlier this month, a joint action day, coordinated by the Netherlands, targeted criminal networks using websites and social media platforms to recruit victims for sexual exploitation. This first online, EU-wide hackathon against trafficking in human beings, supported by Europol and Eurojust, involved law enforcement authorities from 20 countries.</p> <p>The European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT) action day brought together 85 experts from different EU law enforcement authorities at the Dutch Police Academy in Apeldoorn. They focused on combating criminal networks that use social media, the surface web and the dark web to conduct human trafficking. Compared to other crime areas, such as drug trafficking or trafficking of weapons, it is more challenging to identify the indicators of trafficking in human beings in an online environment. This joint action day gathered criminal intelligence to determine these indicators as part of the fight against criminal networks using the online environment to exploit the most vulnerable people. In particular, the investigators targeted human traffickers attempting to lure Ukrainian refugees.</p> <p>The internet and human trafficking are interlinked. Many social media platforms, dating apps and private groups online are being ‘hijacked’ by individuals involved in human trafficking for sexual or labour exploitation. These individuals are trying to mislead law enforcement and avoid detection. The joint efforts of law enforcement in the monitoring of platforms which may offer sexual services, recruitment, and the harbouring or transportation of victims increases the intelligence picture. The international</p>

cooperation, exchange of knowledge, expertise and technology, served the better mapping out of this criminal landscape and served new investigations.

Key figures from the joint operation:

- 114 online platforms monitored in total, of which 30 were related to vulnerable Ukrainian refugees;
- 53 online platforms suspected of links to human trafficking checked, of which 10 were related to vulnerable Ukrainian refugees;
- Five online platforms linked to human trafficking checked, of which four were related to child sexual exploitation on the dark web;
- 11 suspected human traffickers identified, 5 of whom were linked to trafficking of human beings, and specifically to vulnerable Ukrainian citizens;
- 45 possible victims identified, 25 of whom were of Ukrainian nationality;
- 20 platforms with possible links to trafficking of human beings identified for further investigation and monitoring;
- 80 persons/user names checked, out of which 30 were related to possible exploitation of vulnerable Ukrainian citizens.
- Although the actions focused mainly on trafficking in human beings for sexual exploitation, the officers also looked for leads to identify other forms of exploitation, including labour exploitation. The investigators managed to explore a wide range of websites and other online platforms for trafficking in human beings and other criminal activities. These platforms include social media, dating platforms, advertising and aid platforms, forums and messaging applications. Investigators also checked platforms on the dark web in relation to trafficking in human beings and child sexual exploitation online.

The following countries participated in the operation: Austria, Albania, Belgium, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom and Ukraine.

Europol supported the coordination of the operational activities, facilitated the exchange of information and provided analytical support. On the action day, Europol deployed two experts to the coordination center to facilitate the information exchange in real time and crosscheck operational information against Europol's databases. This provided further investigative leads to the participating officers from involved national law enforcement authorities.

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[Read more at Europol](#)

HEADLINE	09/25 Emphasis patrols target SR7 corridor
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/emphasis-patrols-targeting-high-risk-behaviors-sr-7-corridor-set-begin-monday/Y7K45GYDAVFQZK52WSCE32TRBM/
GIST	<p>Law enforcement from across the South Sound will be conducting emphasis patrols on State Route 7 beginning Monday, according to the Pierce County Sheriff's Department.</p> <p>Along with PCSD, the Washington State Patrol and the Lakewood and Puyallup police departments will be participating in the patrols on the Pacific Avenue/Mountain Highway Corridor.</p> <p>Officers will be targeting "high-risk behaviors" along the highway as part of law enforcement's continued efforts to prevent collisions and reduce traffic-related injuries and deaths in the area.</p> <p>The patrols are funded by a grant from the Washington Traffic Safety Commission.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/25 New Orleans PD turns to civilian police
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SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/new-orleans-police-department-hiring-civilians-bolster-force-murderous-crime-wave-hits-city
GIST	<p>The New Orleans Police Department is hiring civilians to help with the force's staffing issues and allow for more police officers to patrol the streets as violent crimes such as murder spike.</p> <p>"The goal is for our officers to feel safe, so they can make our citizens and visitors feel safe," New Orleans Police Superintendent Shaun Ferguson said Thursday at a press conference.</p> <p>Ferguson said the department is focused on hiring civilian police intake specialists, who will monitor phones at the department and replace administrative police officers. The department will also hire between 50 and 75 civilians who will respond to calls that do not require the presence of a police officer. Some of the civilians will even be trained to do detective work, WDSU reported.</p> <p>"As we take calls over the phone, there may be some evidence that needs to be collected with that call. We'll have civilian investigators to go out and collect that evidence instead of an officer having to go out there and collect that evidence," Ferguson said.</p> <p>Police will no longer be required at incidents such as loose animals, medical calls and auto accidents on private property, WDSU reported.</p> <p>New Orleans overtook St. Louis, Missouri, as the murder capital of the country this month, notching 52 homicides per 100,000 residents as of Sept. 11. Homicides have increased by 78% this year compared to 2021, according to data from crime-tracking organization Metropolitan Crime Commission. Homicides are up 121% this year when compared to 2019.</p> <p>Ferguson said the plan to beef up the understaffed force, which lost 150 officers last year alone, will extend to trying to recruit former applicants who were previously rejected.</p> <p>"My message to you — to those of you [who] may have been disqualified in the past, I'm urging you to resubmit your application because some of our hiring criteria has changed," Ferguson said, noting that some changes have been made to the hiring process, such as not allowing credit scores to affect a hiring decision.</p> <p>Civilians will undergo a training process and background checks before they can join the police department.</p> <p>"This is also to reduce some of the workload currently placed on our patrol and district personnel but most importantly to reduce response times," Ferguson added.</p> <p>The plan will ultimately allow for at least 75 additional officers to patrol the streets and will cut down on the average 11-minute response time to priority calls.</p> <p>"We will also be using our traffic and K9, as well as our reserve divisions. Those are units that are normally in a standby position, waiting to be called upon. That will not happen any longer. They will be in the field in some sort of deployment status," Ferguson said.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/25 California arrest: mass shooting plot
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/police-man-arrested-california-plotted-mass-shooting-90487921
GIST	<p>CHICO, Calif. -- A 37-year-old man was arrested Sunday in Northern California on suspicion of threatening to kill police officers and planning a "Las Vegas-style" mass shooting, authorities said.</p> <p>The suspect was taken into custody by SWAT officers at a Super 8 motel in Chico after detectives obtained evidence of his plot, according to a police statement.</p>

	<p>The evidence included unspecified information that he had made “criminal threats to kill specific individuals, specified law enforcement officers, and was preparing to commit a ‘Las Vegas style’ mass shooting with a specified deadline,” said the statement from the Chico Police Department.</p> <p>Sixty people were killed and more than 400 were wounded in Las Vegas when a gunman opened fire on a music festival from a high-rise hotel in 2017.</p> <p>After his arrest, the Chico suspect threatened to kill additional officers and their families, and he battered an officer with a table during the interview process, the police statement said.</p> <p>He could face charges including making criminal threats and battery on a peace officer. He was held without bail at Butte County Jail.</p> <p>Chico is a city of 98,000 people about 175 miles (280 km) north of San Francisco.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/24 Portland OR tests ShotSpotter for gunshots
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/portland-oregon-to-use-microphones-to-track-gunshots/
GIST	<p>PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — To help combat a growing gun violence problem, the mayor of Portland, Oregon, is launching a system proponents say can track the location of gunshots using hidden microphones.</p> <p>Oregon Public Broadcasting report s a panel recommended the city adopt ShotSpotter in a July report.</p> <p>Stephanie Howard, Mayor Ted Wheeler’s director of community safety, said Thursday the decision to advance a pilot program with the technology was made after Wheeler met with Police Chief Chuck Lovell.</p> <p>“Chief Lovell recommended exploring implementing ShotSpotter on a pilot basis and the mayor agrees with that recommendation,” Howard said.</p> <p>ShotSpotter says it can identify and locate gunshots in real-time using small microphones placed in neighborhoods. Police could then use that data to investigate and deter crime.</p> <p>Critics say the technology is unreliable.</p> <p>A study by the MacArthur Justice Center found that “more than 90% of ShotSpotter alerts lead police to find no evidence to corroborate gunfire when police arrive at the location ShotSpotter sent them.”</p> <p>Oregon’s largest city has been struggling to respond to increased violence on city streets.</p> <p>Police say, as of Wednesday, there had been 958 shootings in 2022, with 290 people injured by gunfire. There have been 66 homicides, 57 involving gunfire.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/24 Amusement park shooting near Pittsburgh
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/3-wounded-in-shooting-at-amusement-park-near-pittsburgh/
GIST	<p>West Mifflin, Pa. (AP) — Three people, including two teenagers, were wounded by gunfire late Saturday at an amusement park southeast of Pittsburgh, which was kicking off a Halloween-themed festival.</p> <p>Allegheny County police said a 39-year-old man and two 15-year-old boys sustained leg wounds in the gunfire shortly before 11 p.m. Saturday at Kennywood Park in West Mifflin. Park security responded along with local and county police who were working a security detail at the park.</p>

Emergency responders took the man and one of the youths to a hospital, where the man was treated for a gunshot wound to the leg and released. The youth was admitted with a gunshot wound to the leg, and another youth grazed on the leg was brought to the hospital by a relative; both teens were listed in stable condition.

Witnesses told investigators that two groups of teenagers were involved in an altercation in front of the Musik Express ride and shots were fired by a male wearing a black hooded sweatshirt and a dark colored COVID mask. A handgun was found near the scene, police said.

Kennywood posted a statement on Twitter around 12:30 a.m. Sunday saying the park had been closed for the night and all guests had exited. Officials said they were “aware of a situation that occurred this evening and are working with local law enforcement. The safety of our guests and team members are our top priority.”

The park says on its website that all guests, staff and management must pass through metal detectors at the entrance gate, and all bags, purses and coolers are subject to search. The site also says “weaponry of any kind is strictly prohibited at the park.”

Police are investigating using the park’s security cameras and witness statements, KDKA-TV reported. County police asked anyone with information or video to contact investigators. The Pittsburgh Public Safety Department said in a social media post that its officers were assisting.

Kennywood was celebrating the first night of its Phantom Fall Fest, scheduled to run through Oct. 16, according to the park’s website. The park will be closed Sunday, with tickets dated for that day good for any other day of the Phantom Fall Fest, and is to reopen Friday, the park said on its website.

The website bills the park as a family fun destination featuring seven roller coasters and rides for children.

Ward Troetschel, of West Mifflin, told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette that he arrived at about 9:45 p.m. Saturday and saw “way too many unaccompanied minors.” He said he left at about 10:30 p.m. because young people were being aggressive and “trying to start fights.” As he left, groups of at least 100 ran past him two or three times, Troetschel said, calling it a scene with “lots of chaos.”

Thomas Harrison of Irwin told the Tribune-Review that he was with his fiancé and parents when the shots were fired, and then people were screaming, running and pushing each other over to get out of the park.

“Kids were crying,” Harrison said. “Some people were looking for their loved ones.”

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HEADLINE	09/23 UN: Russia committed war crimes Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/23/russia-has-committed-war-crimes-in-ukraine-say-un-investigators
GIST	<p>The United Nations has said its investigators have concluded that Russia committed war crimes in Ukraine, including bombings of civilian areas, numerous executions, torture and horrific sexual violence.</p> <p>The UN has made the investigation of human rights violations in the war a priority and in May its top human rights body mandated a team of experts to begin work in the country.</p> <p>Since then, UN investigators, have risked their lives to collect evidence of crimes perpetrated against civilians, including in areas still threatened by enemy forces or laid with mines.</p> <p>The team of three independent experts on Friday presented their first oral update to the UN human rights council, after it launched initial investigations looking at the areas of Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv and Sumy regions, adding that it would broaden its inquiries.</p>

Speaking a day before the seven-month anniversary of Russia's invasion of its neighbour, Erik Mose, the head of the investigation team, told the council that, based on the evidence gathered by the Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, "it has concluded that war crimes have been committed in Ukraine".

The team of investigators visited 27 towns and settlements, as well as graves and detention and torture centres; interviewed more than 150 victims and witnesses; and met with advocacy groups and government officials.

Mose said the team had been especially "struck by the large number of executions in the areas that we visited", and the frequent "visible signs of executions on bodies, such as hands tied behind backs, gunshot wounds to the head, and slit throats".

He added it was investigating such deaths in 16 towns and settlements, and had received credible allegations regarding many more cases that it would seek to document. The investigators had also received "consistent accounts of ill-treatment and torture, which were carried out during unlawful confinement", the council was told.

In the settlements of Bucha, Hostomel and Borodianka, occupied for about a month by Russian troops, Ukrainian investigators found dozens of mass graves where the bodies of civilians, tortured and murdered, had been buried.

Since the Russians withdrew from the area, a group of young volunteers worked tirelessly to exhume the bodies and send them to forensic doctors who have been collecting evidence of crimes perpetrated by Russian troops.

Some of the victims had told the investigators they were transferred to Russia and held for weeks in prisons. Others had "disappeared" after such transfers. "Interlocutors described beatings, electric shocks and forced nudity, as well as other types of violations in such detention facilities," Mose said.

Mose said the team had also "processed two incidents of ill-treatment against Russian Federation soldiers by Ukrainian forces", adding that "while few in numbers, such cases continue to be the subject of our attention".

He said investigators had also documented cases of sexual and gender-based violence, in some cases establishing that Russian soldiers were the perpetrators.

"There are examples of cases where relatives were forced to witness the crimes," he said. "In the cases we have investigated, the age of victims of sexual and gendered-based violence ranged from four to 82 years."

The commission had documented a wide range of crimes against children, Mose added, including children who were "raped, tortured, and unlawfully confined".

In April, forensic doctors told the Guardian they had found evidence that some women were raped before being killed by Russian forces. "We already have a few cases which suggest that these women had been raped before being shot to death," Vladyslav Perovskyi, a Ukrainian forensic doctor who has carried out dozens of autopsies on people from Bucha, Irpin and Borodianka, told the Guardian.

At least two men in a list of accused Russian war criminals released by Ukrainian prosecutors are accused of sexual assault and rape.

Mose, in his report to the council, also pointed to "the Russian Federation's use of explosive weapons with wide area effects in populated areas", which he said was "a source of immense harm and suffering for civilians".

	<p>The UN highlighted that a number of attacks the team had investigated “had been carried out without distinguishing between civilians and combatants”, including attacks with cluster munitions, banned by most of the world under a 2008 treaty.</p> <p>Since the beginning of Moscow’s invasion, Russian troops have been accused of having used a number of illegal weapons that have killed hundreds of civilians in the Ukrainian region of Kyiv, including extremely powerful unguided bombs in populated areas, which have destroyed at least eight civilian buildings.</p> <p>According to evidence, cluster munitions were unleashed in areas where there were no military personnel and no military infrastructure.</p> <p>The commission’s work could ultimately contribute to the work of international criminal court prosecutors who could bring charges over war crimes in Ukraine, although it remains uncertain whether Russia or other alleged perpetrators would ever face justice.</p> <p>In a separate development, on Friday, Ukrainian officials said they had exhumed about 436 bodies from a burial site in the recently recaptured city of Izium and that at least 30 of them showed signs of torture.</p> <p>Mose said: “This is of course a novel incident but we certainly intend to look into the Izium event as well.”</p>
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HEADLINE	09/24 Oklahoma prisons staff shortages, violence
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/prisons-violence-united-states-oklahoma-612b1d541f1f6522662a4ad20d4a0ff1
GIST	<p>HOLDENVILLE, Okla. (AP) — Working as a prison guard in Oklahoma is becoming an ever more dangerous job as the state, with one of the highest incarceration rates in the United States, struggles with violence and understaffing at detention facilities. Long hours, dangerous conditions and remote, rural locations have meant fewer guards and a system plagued with increased killings and violence.</p> <p>Three inmates were killed in separate incidents this year at the same private prison in rural, east-central Oklahoma where a correctional officer was fatally stabbed by an inmate over the summer, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press.</p> <p>Davis Correctional Facility, a 1,700-bed men’s prison in Holdenville operated by Tennessee-based private prison operator CoreCivic, has been operating at only about 70% of its contractually obligated staffing level, according to a 2021 audit of the facility provided to the AP after an open-records request.</p> <p>Alan Jay Hershberger, a 61-year-old veteran correctional officer from Missouri who previously worked at a CoreCivic facility in Kansas, was traveling to Oklahoma to work at the prison for six-week stints at a time, according to his family. On July 31, Hershberger was supervising about 30 inmates in a recreation yard at the prison when 49-year-old inmate Gregory Thompson walked past him, pulled a 16-inch, homemade knife from his waistband and plunged it into Hershberger’s back, according to an affidavit from Oklahoma Department of Corrections investigator J. Dale Hunter.</p> <p>“The victim immediately grabbed his side and quickly walked out of the A Unit South door toward a second correctional officer ... and collapsed,” Hunter wrote. “The defendant followed behind the victim and began shouting, “On the set” and “On the Crips,” prison slang indicating the action is the responsibility of the Crips prison gang of which the defendant is a validated member.”</p> <p>Thompson, who is serving a no-parole life sentence for a 2003 murder conviction, has gang affiliation and a history of prison violence, including a 2010 first-degree manslaughter conviction in a case in which Thompson stabbed another inmate to death in 2009 at the Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester. Despite his history, Thompson was held among the general population at Davis Correctional Facility, according to the DOC.</p>

“He should not have been in general (population), knowing how violent he was and his history,” said Jessica Scott, a correctional officer who worked with Hershberger during a six-week stint at Davis. “Administrative segregation is where he should have been.”

Scott, who has worked at two other CoreCivic prisons in Kansas and Tennessee, said the facility at Holdenville had more problems maintaining appropriate staffing levels, cell doors that didn’t lock properly and inmates who were particularly violent and noncompliant toward staff.

“It was by far the worst,” said Scott, who now works at a state prison in Kansas. “There’s a reason I’m not there anymore.”

Thompson has been charged with first-degree murder in Hughes County. His public defenders declined to comment on the case.

CoreCivic did not respond directly to questions about Thompson’s offender-level status or its staffing ratio at the time of the killing, but acknowledged the company is taking steps to improve staffing levels.

“CoreCivic is committed to the health and safety of our employees, the individuals in our care and our communities,” CoreCivic spokesman Matthew Davio said in a statement. “We’re also committed to attracting and retaining qualified, professional staff at Davis. However, both public and private correctional facilities have faced staffing challenges across the country.”

Davio said the company used additional funding this year from the Oklahoma Legislature to increase pay for officers at the facility and also has advertised for openings and launched recruiting efforts at military bases and local colleges. A billboard along a highway near the prison, located 75 miles (120 kilometers) southeast of Oklahoma City, advertises starting pay at \$22.10 per hour.

Still, another inmate was killed at the prison earlier this month, the third this year, according to the DOC. Correctional officers watched as 32-year-old Darren Padron strangled his cellmate, 27-year-old Dustin Patterson as he pleaded for his life, according to an affidavit from a DOC investigator.

“Correctional officers reported they witnessed Darren R. Padron attack Patterson with various strangulation techniques including a lateral neck restraint, pushing his elbow into Patterson’s throat as he lay prone, and utilizing Patterson’s shirt as a ligature,” the affidavit states.

The officers told DOC investigators that Padron refused to comply with verbal directives and continued to strangle Patterson even after multiple deployments of pepper spray.

Padron also has been charged with first-degree murder. Court records don’t indicate the name of an attorney who could speak on his behalf.

Prison records show both Thompson and Padron have been moved to the maximum-security Oklahoma State Penitentiary in McAlester.

CoreCivic, formerly the Corrections Corporation of America, has a long history of problems with inmate violence at its prisons. In one of the deadliest prison attacks in Oklahoma history, [four inmates were stabbed to death](#) in 2015 at a prison operated by CCA. Those attacks followed a violent outburst a few months earlier in which some 200 to 300 of the prison’s roughly 1,600 inmates were involved in a brawl that resulted in 11 prisoners being taken to the hospital.

Just last month, the private prison company [agreed to settle a federal lawsuit](#) over a Tennessee inmate’s killing in which low staffing levels were blamed.

While some of it is simply the nature of the work, prisons are now also competing against oil field jobs that pay better. The Legislature approved a pay raise for prison guards this year to help combat hiring challenges, boosting recruits in a hopeful sign of improvement.

Private facilities are not alone in their struggle to decrease violence and hire and retain staff. Oklahoma has long had one of the [highest average annual homicide rates](#) among all the state prison systems in the country from 2001 to 2019, with 14 homicides per 100,000 inmates during that time. South Carolina topped it only slightly with 15 homicides per 100,000 inmates, according to a [2021 report](#) from the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Bobby Cleveland, a former state lawmaker and director of an association that represents prison workers in Oklahoma, said understaffing at both private and public prisons has indeed led to more violence.

He suggested gradually reducing private prisons.

“They’re constantly going on lockdown because of staff shortages. You’ve got more drugs coming in, you get more phones coming in. And what happens is you get inmates fighting over the contraband and who controls it,” he said, adding “When you’re short staffed, you’re going to have more problems.”

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HEADLINE	09/23 ‘Swatting’ disrupts schools; stokes fear
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/09/23/school-threat-swatting-hoax-shooter/
GIST	<p>In schools across the country a troubling scenario is playing out: a call comes in about a shooting at the school. Someone has a gun. Police respond, only to discover the report was a hoax.</p> <p>Just this week more than a dozen schools in Minnesota were targeted with “swatting” incidents, reports of a false shooter or mass-casualty event. Threats in Denver forced the city to shut down all 25 of its public library branches, and an area high school to cancel classes Wednesday amid a surge of hoaxes reported at schools across the state. A Texas teen was arrested for calling in a fake threat to a campus as a “joke,” prompting a warning from Fort Worth police against school hoaxes.</p> <p>The calls are part of a trend that is disrupting school days, prompting lockdowns and further traumatizing communities already on edge. Although these threats are fake, the menace of real violence looms just months after a gunman killed 19 students and two teachers at a Uvalde, Tex., elementary school.</p> <p>“It’s really indicative of how people have weaponized the fear that we have about an active shooter against us,” said Amy Klinger, director of programs and a co-founder of the Educator’s School Safety Network, which has tracked violent incidents at schools.</p> <p>Schools in 14 states — Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia — have reported swatting incidents since Sept. 13, according to the national group of school resource officers. At a school in San Antonio, a man reportedly injured his arm trying to break a window at a high school that went on lockdown after false reports of a shooting this week.</p> <p>Louisiana has also been affected, with at least 15 schools receiving calls of active shooter threats or mass casualties Thursday. The reports came from an internet-based phone number with an out-of-state area code, officials said.</p> <p>These calls strain police resources, said Mo Canady, executive director of the National Association of School Resource Officers. Swatting “triggers what should be a very critical incident response from law enforcement, from other emergency services, from the school — that is a lot of resources, time being taken up,” he said.</p> <p>The FBI is aware of the calls and “takes swatting very seriously because it puts innocent people at risk,” the agency said in a statement. It added it does not have “information to indicate a specific and credible threat” and is working with local, state and federal law enforcement to gather information. The agency did not answer questions about who might be making the calls and if they are connected.</p>

A report of an active shooter at Roosevelt High School in Northwest Washington prompted a large police response on Tuesday. Police said the report turned out to be false.

“The caller stated there was an active shooter inside the school and provided specific information to suggest there were multiple students that had been injured, and that somebody was armed with a vest and a gun,” said Dustin Sternbeck, a D.C. police spokesman.

The school went into lockdown, Brandon Eatman, the school’s acting principal, wrote in a letter to families. The entire ordeal — from the time Eatman said he was informed about the incident to the time police finished canvassing the school’s grounds — took nearly an hour out of the day.

Yolanda Anderson, who has two teenagers at Roosevelt and is president of the parent-teacher association, said she heard about the threat from another parent. She immediately texted her kids. She later spoke to a social worker who said some students were crying, and adults were visibly shaken. The situation has been frustrating, Anderson said, adding she thinks swatting has gained popularity on social media.

“That is what makes me angry,” she said. “The fact that students, or kids, or people on TikTok believe that it’s humorous to cause a waste of tax dollars, to cause unnecessary trauma.”

The possible perpetrators are wide-ranging and could include disgruntled parents, students, former employees or random people on the internet who think causing a law enforcement response to that degree is funny, Klinger said. School systems often don’t have time to investigate how credible a threat is, because their first job is to secure students, she said.

In Virginia, an unknown person on Monday called 911 to report an active shooter event at Loudoun Valley and Loudoun County high schools, according to a message from the school system to families. School resource officers and patrol officers quickly investigated and determined the reports were false. Police investigated similar calls of false threats reported at schools in Arlington and almost 10 other Virginia school systems.

These fake threats being investigated in grade schools follow high-profile bomb threats that have targeted historically Black colleges and universities since January. At least [36 HBCUs](#) — more than one-third of the country’s historically Black schools — received threats this year. Howard University has been targeted on eight occasions, Wayne A.I. Frederick, the school’s president, said in August.

In a message to the campus, Frederick encouraged professors to give students reprieve, noting “anxiety, interrupted rest, and other factors that can stem from this kind of traumatic experience.”

None of the threats targeting HBCUs have led to actual violence.

Students have just endured more than two years of a pandemic, virtual learning “and just the overall rise of violence in our communities,” said Canady, of the school resource officers association. “To add a false report of a critical incident on top of that and further traumatize them is criminal.”

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HEADLINE	09/24 ‘Fat Leonard’ luxury life, escape, capture
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2022/09/24/fat-leonard-escape-navy-scandal/
GIST	<p>The rules laid out in federal court were clear: Leonard Glenn Francis, the Malaysian defense contractor who admitted bribing dozens of Navy officers as part of a \$35 million fraud scheme, would remain in home confinement under tight, 24-7 security while he provided evidence against corrupt Navy personnel. Only approved visitors could enter the home. An ankle monitor would alert authorities should he somehow slip away.</p> <p>“He’s not going anywhere,” one of his defense attorneys, Devin Burstein, assured the judge in late 2020. But the criminal mastermind known as “Fat Leonard” because of his 6-2, 350-pound frame eventually did go somewhere, cutting off his ankle monitor this past Labor Day weekend and fleeing the San Diego</p>

mansion where he had been living with private security staff that he paid for under a court-approved deal meant to prevent his escape.

He was captured after 16 days on the run, [caught](#) Tuesday at an airport in Venezuela from which he was headed to Russia after earlier stops in Mexico and Cuba, according to Interpol. Interpol's Venezuela director general, Carlos Gárate Rondón, said the 57-year-old Francis would be handed over to judicial authorities to begin the paperwork for extradition.

The international manhunt for Francis renewed interest in his long-running case and the way he outmaneuvered federal authorities in escaping weeks before his sentencing. His flight also triggered new calls from attorneys representing Navy officers in related cases for more details about the health issues that caused Francis to be released from prison on a medical furlough that the court repeatedly extended without objection from prosecutors.

Francis pleaded guilty in 2015 and became a cooperating witness. He spent a couple of years in prison before a diagnosis of kidney cancer led to his initial furlough in 2018 for medical treatment, and then multiple extensions, court files show. With Francis's help, prosecutors [secured convictions](#) of 33 of 34 defendants.

Francis increasingly took advantage of his confinement rules, according to new records on his household arrangements obtained by The Washington Post and interviews with people who knew or worked for him during his years in home detention. He hired servants to meet his family's every need and undermined the court's security requirements aimed at keeping him from fleeing by stationing his personal security guards in windowless garages, with no night patrols and no visitor's logs. He seemed able to anticipate when federal officers were headed to check on him, the interviews showed, and allowed a video crew to film him days before he fled.

During his years on medical furlough, Francis stayed at three private homes, where his comforts and liberties grew. Most recently he, his family and an English bulldog lived in a five-bedroom, seven-bath home with a \$7,000-a-month rent in a gated community, court filings and interviews show.

At his first stay outside a cell, in an apartment near his doctor's office, Francis's staff prepared so much food for him that uneaten meals filled two to three trash bags each day that would have to be placed in a commercial dumpster nearby, according to Ricardo Buhain, a live-in, around-the-clock security guard who said that he had been hired via an introduction from a doctor treating Francis and that Leonard paid him \$10,000 a month.

"He is kind of one of those Crazy Rich Asian kind of people," said Buhain, who said he was Francis's first security guard during his home confinement, referring to the novel and romantic comedy about a fabulously wealthy Singapore family. "The servants really served him. They bathed all of his kids. They fed them 24-7."

A guard hired as Buhain's successor at the apartment, Anthony Galvan, earned about \$7,500 a month and said he worked a 12-hour daylight shift and never saw signs of overnight security.

Galvan said that there was never anyone on duty when he arrived or left and that he spent much of his time opening Amazon boxes.

"It's crazy how much stuff he ordered," he said. "He had packages coming from Amazon all day long. He had so much deliveries happening every single day. Sometimes it would be couches, all kinds of furniture, books. Every morning I would show back up at the garage and there would just be boxes in there."

In the days before he went on the lam, Francis paid for U-Haul trucks to carry his family's belongings out of his home and brought in a film crew to interview him, according to Perla Nation, who said she met Francis through an attorney and worked during his final month of home confinement handling administrative tasks.

Nation said she asked Francis about the film crew but didn't get an explanation. "He said it was 'just something that I'm doing,'" she said.

Despite working in the home two or three days a week, Nation said she never met the security guard who she said stayed in the property's garage. She said she never saw a log of visitors to the house.

Nation said the U-Hauls were there to clear the house of belongings from Francis's children as they moved out in anticipation of his sentencing.

"He is a very smart man, and you are seeing the fallout now," she said while Francis was still at large. "Because even within those confines he always had options."

Francis's escape has drawn additional scrutiny to the federal judge, the U.S. attorney's office, Pretrial Services and the U.S. Marshals Service for their roles in his unusual confinement. And whether Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro [will allow](#) his extradition is unknown. The United States doesn't recognize Maduro's government as legitimate. The countries cut diplomatic relations in 2019.

Beginning in 2018, U.S. District Judge Janis Lynn Sammartino of the Southern District of California granted Francis the medical furlough for treatment of cancer, which she and attorneys for both sides worried could prove fatal, according to court transcripts.

From that time on, court transcripts show, fears that Francis would bolt from home detention nagged the judge and prosecutors, alongside anxiety about how best to care for a critical witness in proceedings that were stretching for years.

"I even went so far as to wonder if he is still in this country," Sammartino commented at a 2020 hearing after Francis was discharged from a doctor's care.

Court transcripts at other times show the judge and attorneys discussing the need to take a deposition with Francis to preserve his testimony should he not survive to help at trials.

Details of his health had been shielded in closed-door hearings conducted since 2018. Redacted transcripts were made public recently only after defense attorneys for Navy personnel on trial pressed for information that they argued could help defense teams probe Francis's credibility and learn more about the terms of his home detention.

Because of the redactions, the full extent of Francis's medical condition and response to treatment still are difficult to discern.

As the government prepared to release him on furlough, Sammartino said paying for constant security over months or years was too pricey for the government, leading to Francis's hiring his own security staff.

"It's private security, which probably wouldn't have been the court's preference," Sammartino said in February 2018. "But I don't think the Marshals are going to put somebody out there 24-7." Assistant U.S. Attorney Mark Pletcher said at the same hearing that he agreed with the court's assessment that security at the time "seems like the least of our concerns."

The judge, the U.S. attorney's office and Pretrial Services did not respond to interview requests. The U.S. Marshal's Service responded to an interview request with a statement that said, "The U.S. Department of Justice generally does not comment on extradition-related matters until a defendant is in the United States."

Francis was only three weeks shy of his sentencing date, scheduled for Sept. 22, when he fled, aided by the fact that no one knocked on his door until six hours after his ankle monitor registered a problem.

Until then, former staff and others who knew him said, he lived a life of opulence.

A Navy veteran, Buhain said he met Francis through one of Francis's doctors. Buhain said he wired the apartment to which Francis was released with video cameras and motion detectors, then stayed in a separate residence on the property where he could monitor Francis through a window overlooking the front gate. Buhain provided The Post a document outlining "standard operating procedure" that he said he was given when he started the job. It identifies only lawyers, paralegals and Francis's five children as approved visitors.

Within the first six months, Buhain said, most of Francis's children and his mother moved in with him. When security guard Galvan took over the job in the fall of 2018, he said that Francis gave him a 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. shift and a chair in a windowless garage where he could monitor security cameras of the apartment and grounds.

Pretrial Services staff members repeatedly told the court that they made unannounced visits to check on Francis, according to court transcripts.

Buhain and Galvan said Francis seemed to know when someone from the agency was about to arrive. "Me, personally, I feel like he knew when they were coming," Galvan said. "I don't know how, but he would always text me, 'So and so is here.' He would always text me a minute or two before they were here."

In December 2020, a Pretrial Services official arrived in late morning at Francis's home, found no security present and alerted the judge, who called a hearing.

"Maybe I can make it simple for everybody," the judge said. "Security means security. It's a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week situation. It doesn't conform to somebody's schedule, and that was the court's concern in setting this manner."

"I was so surprised to learn that this was being handled in the way it was," Sammartino added, according to the transcript. "So that's the only thing. It's not a super big deal. But it needs to be taken care of."

Sammartino got another unwelcome surprise a year later when a podcast series featuring interviews with Francis boasting of how he reeled in the Navy was posted online. The leader of the project, Tom Wright, said he had podcast equipment delivered to Francis through one of his staffers.

Joseph Mancano, a defense attorney for a retired Navy captain convicted in Francis's scheme, said the episode illustrated how the government should have been more careful in its handling of Francis, particularly given how many people he had hoodwinked as part of his fraudulent business. He noted that Francis still owes the government \$30 million in restitution.

"Leonard Francis is a guy who will do whatever it takes to help himself," Mancano said. "That's how he's lived his life. So he's going to do whatever he can to try to get what he needs, and it wouldn't surprise me, in fact, if he wasn't planning [his escape] for a long time."

Nation, 33, who started in August helping Francis with administrative tasks, said he may have lulled authorities into complacency because, in her experience, he very seldom left except to take short walks, go to church, or attend legal and medical appointments.

"I think that's why the system became so lax around him," she said, "because he really was a model of house arrest in that way."

The security system met its ultimate test about 7:30 a.m. on Sept. 4, according to a timeline provided by a U.S. Marshals spokesman in response to questions sent by The Post before Francis's capture.

The Pretrial Services office received an automatic notification that there was a problem with Francis's anklet. Pretrial Services staff and members of his defense team tried and failed to reach him by text and phone that morning.

A member of the defense team knocked on his door at about 1:30 in the afternoon and, finding the house quiet, called the San Diego Police, who arrived an hour later and discovered the severed monitor in a portable cooler filled with water in an otherwise mostly empty home, the Marshals Service said.

Francis's escape became public when it was [first reported by the San Diego Union-Tribune](#) the following day. The Marshals Service and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service offered a \$40,000 award for information leading to his capture.

Nation said she saw Francis the day before his departure and was deeply disappointed by his decision to flee. During his final days in San Diego, after his family left the rented home, Francis grew deeply melancholy as his sentencing approached, she said.

"He became more and more morose as time went on, but it was natural to see him that way because you're coming up against this thing that is going to change the course of your life," she said. "You don't know what's going to happen. I remember the last time I saw him, and I could just see his face and it was so sad."

She said, "It's probably the biggest disappointment in my life to learn that Leo had fled. You want to believe the best in someone."

Nation said law enforcement investigators interviewed her for four to five hours after Francis's disappearance.

Her attorney, Stephen P. White, told The Post that Nation had no advance knowledge of Francis's flight even as she helped him dispose of his remaining belongings.

"He used her kindness and sensitivity to his advantage," White said.

Left with Nation was an English bulldog named Puteri, which belonged to the Francis family. Nation has boarded the dog and hopes to be able to return the pet to the Francis children.

Sandra Jenney, another former house staff member for Francis, faces a lawsuit brought by the landlord of Francis's last home. The landlord claims to be due back rent and damages as a result of Francis's escape.

Jenney worked for Francis as early as 2018, according to the standard operating procedure document.

In a lawsuit filed Sept. 13 in California Superior Court, San Diego County, homeowner Mitesh Kalthia says Jenney and one of Francis's sons, Leonardo Francis, signed the lease to the five-bedroom home where Francis and his family stayed. Kalthia alleges he has not been paid the final month's rent of \$7,000 and is seeking a total of more than \$25,000 for the unpaid rent and other damages, according to the suit. Jenney and her attorney declined to comment. Leonardo Francis could not be located to seek comment.

Kalthia's attorney, Michael Wright, said Kalthia "didn't even know Leonard was the tenant" because Jenney paid the bills: "He was dealing with her."

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HEADLINE	09/23 Rise vehicular homicide, assault charges
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/washington-state-sees-rise-in-crashes-ending-in-vehicular-homicide-assault-charges

KING COUNTY, Wash. — New surveillance video obtained by KOMO News shows a deadly crash in Burien last month. It's drawing attention to what Washington State Patrol (WSP) troopers said is an "alarmingly" growing trend of crashes ending in vehicular homicide or vehicular assault charges.

Officials said a repeat offender in a stolen car violently plowed into Dory Larsen and Shaleese Walker's cars in Burien in August after running away from a traffic stop. Larsen, a 64-year-old mother, died, leaving her family shattered. The deadly crash was captured on surveillance footage.

"You never think it's going to happen to you, and when it does, there's no book to consult, nothing, you're just in shock," said Dory's husband, Bill Larsen.

Police said Mohamed Tayib is now charged with vehicular homicide, felony hit-and-run, and reckless driving in connection with the crash.

In March, Robert Reagan and Jessica Runnels survived a similar violent crash in Burien.

Prosecutors said Edgar Moctezuma-Ocampo was speeding twice the legal limit, aggressively weaving through traffic — then rammed the couple's car.

"It's getting worse, we're all seeing it every day," said Robert Reagan, a vehicular assault crash survivor. "If I was hit more towards the door or anything on my side, I would not be here."

Reagan spent 22 days at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle with fractures to his ribs and feet.

"God was looking out, the angels were looking out, it was very traumatic, very traumatic," Reagan said. "It's hard to go through and think about."

WSP troopers said on King County highways, traffic deaths that include vehicular homicides and assaults are getting worse.

"It's alarming, I mean, we want zero deaths, of course," trooper Rick Johnson said.

Troopers said in 2020, 19 people died in traffic deaths. In 2021, the numbers went up to 35 traffic deaths. So far, 2022 has already surpassed all of last year with 43 traffic deaths.

Troopers said most of the crashes involve the drivers being impaired in some way. KOMO News asked troopers what they attribute the spike to.

"It's hard to make sense of it," Johnson said. "We just want to encourage the public to make smart choices when they get behind the wheel."

In Washington state, someone can be charged with [vehicular homicide](#) if they cause another person's death while driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or driving recklessly, or driving with disregard for others safety. A driver can be charged with [vehicular assault](#) if they cause "great bodily harm" under the same conditions as vehicular homicide.

State troopers are working 24/7, patrolling the highways for dangerous drivers.

"The No. 1 thing is how it affects people's lives," Johnson said. "Not just the people who lose their loved ones and not just the person who commits this vehicular homicide or assault. It's the family members of both sides."

Some victims said they want more accountability to deter drivers or criminals from making harmful choices.

	<p>“These people need to spend time in jail,” Larsen said. “They can’t let them out into society, these are dangerous people.”</p> <p>The King County Prosecutor’s Office said in 2021 it filed 19 cases with one or more counts of vehicular homicide. So far in 2022, it has filed 13 cases with one or more counts of vehicular homicide. As for vehicular assaults, last year, prosecutors filed 59 cases with one or more counts of vehicular assault. So far in 2022, they’ve filed 29 cases with one or more counts of vehicular assault.</p> <p>Driving has never been the same for Reagan, who said he’s now more vigilant than ever before.</p> <p>“My message would be: slow down,” Reagan said. “Praying for my family every day, every day my son goes home, or my girlfriend goes for a drive, I say, ‘Hey, drive safe to everybody, I love you.’”</p>
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HEADLINE	09/23 Auburn drive-by shooting: 1 dead, 2 injured
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/drive-by-shooting-in-auburn-leaves-two-injured-one-dead
GIST	<p>AUBURN, Wash. — A triple shooting in Auburn killed one man and sent two other men to the hospital, and police said they have few leads on a suspect.</p> <p>Neighbors said they heard gunfire around 9 o’clock outside an apartment complex at 812 10th St NE. The three victims were all shot on the street, according to police.</p> <p>Investigators didn’t have much information to release. They said they had no suspect description and weren’t even positive how the person got away.</p> <p>However, KOMO News spoke to a witness named James Bradley who said he was walking his dog outside the apartment when he spotted a car with several people sitting inside and instantly realized the danger.</p> <p>“I witnessed a vehicle diagonal to my property with its lights off shoot a gun in the air four times before it sped off with its lights off. and as it did I realized there was a body so i had my phone on me and called 911 and ran over to the body to see if there was anything i could do to help,” Bradley said.</p> <p>The suspect remains at large.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/23 Arrest: man rams WSP car, shoots trooper
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/trooper-drives-himself-hospital-after-being-rammed-shot/NVY3J3WA7NHQJGKGXI4Y7ZNHJA/
GIST	<p>WALLA WALLA, Wash. — A Washington State Patrol trooper who was rammed by a car and shot in the face in Walla Walla on Thursday drove himself to the hospital, law enforcement said.</p> <p>The shooting occurred at 5:20 p.m. in the area of West Poplar Street and Northwest Myra Road.</p> <p>The suspect, 37-year-old Brandon Dennis O’Neel, rammed the trooper’s car near the Sportsman’s Warehouse and then shot the trooper in the face, according to the Columbia County Sheriff’s Office</p> <p>The trooper, Dean Atkinson Jr., is a five-year veteran of the Washington State Patrol.</p> <p>After the attack, Atkinson drove himself to Providence St. Mary Medical Center. He was then airlifted to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, where as of Friday morning he was in serious condition in the intensive care unit.</p> <p>KIRO 7 received video showing the convoy and the moment when Atkinson arrived at the airfield.</p>

	<p>Shortly after the shooting, Milton-Freewater police from Oregon tried to stop a vehicle that matched the description of the shooting suspect's vehicle. A short chase ensued but came to an end on Highway 125 North off Stateline Road, where O'Neel was arrested.</p> <p>O'Neel is being detained at the Walla Walla County Jail.</p> <p>Gov. Jay Inslee tweeted Thursday night in response to the shooting, thanking those who apprehended the suspect.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/24 Law enforcement push back on pursuit law
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/washington-law-enforcement-pursuit-law/281-b686c8f9-bbf2-444f-8ce0-5a63881688aa
GIST	<p>SNOHOMISH COUNTY, Wash. — Last year's passage of House Bill 1054 restricts when police can pursue a suspect in a vehicle.</p> <p>With the law in place, police have approached suspected criminals who then speed away knowing there's nothing the police can do. According to authorities, it is an all too common occurrence.</p> <p>"It's frustrating for our officers," said Marysville Police Chief Erik Scairpon. "It's also frustrating for the community."</p> <p>They can only chase someone if there is probable cause to believe the person is either impaired, an escaped felon or has committed a violent or sexual crime.</p> <p>Law enforcement from across Washington launched a public relations offensive aimed at the state's law. The five-minute video was produced by the Snohomish County Sheriff's Office.</p> <p>In the video, Sheriff Adam Fortney voiced his concerns.</p> <p>"Public safety decreases as criminals become more brazen, knowing police cannot pursue them to enforce the law," Fortney said.</p> <p>The video uses body camera footage showing suspects speeding away from officers, sometimes crashing into innocent bystanders.</p> <p>Chelan County was one of the first jurisdictions adversely impacted by the new legislation.</p> <p>There, the law prevented police from pursuing a suspect who stole a school bus. He later stole a front loader and smashed it into his own house.</p> <p>The state of New Jersey reversed its pursuit law after seeing crime spike.</p> <p>Chief Scairpon believes Washington's law must be fixed to give officers more discretion.</p> <p>"If the risk of not apprehending the offender outweighs the risk of the pursuit, then police should be able to pursue and apprehend that person," Scairpon said.</p> <p>The law's original sponsor called the video a "fear-mongering campaign ad."</p> <p>State Representative Jesse Johnson doesn't see any need to change the law. Instead, Johnson wants to put more tools, like drones, in the hands of police to more safely track someone who is running from them.</p> <p>"It's not going to increase public safety to put things back the way it was before, by any means," said Johnson, a Federal Way Democrat. "Our job is to save lives. In 2020, alone, we had 18 deaths from police</p>

	<p>pursuits. That's the second leading cause of death from police violence. That decreased by 55% last year because of the bill, so it is doing what it was intended to do."</p> <p>From January through May of 2021, Washington State Patrol reported 934 incidents of "failure to yield" to a police officer, the first year it tracked that data.</p> <p>A bill that would have given police more discretion passed the state House of Representatives during the last legislative session, but it died in the Senate.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/24 Murder charge dismissed: treatment delays
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/murder-charge-dismissed-because-of-treatment-delays/
GIST	<p>EVERETT, Wash. (AP) — An Edmonds man’s first-degree murder charge in the death of his father was dismissed this week because of delays in his mental health treatment.</p> <p>Snohomish County Superior Court Judge Janice Ellis on Wednesday found John Fry’s continued wait for transport to Western State Hospital could violate his due process rights, The Herald reported.</p> <p>“His dangerousness is obvious, yet it is not appropriate to maintain him in the Snohomish County Jail without a reliable path towards restoration services,” Ellis said in court Wednesday.</p> <p>She said she was dismissing the case but that charges could be refiled.</p> <p>Fry, 27, must be evaluated by a designated crisis responder before he is released from jail.</p> <p>He had been diagnosed with schizophrenia years before his father Stephen Fry, 64, was killed, he reportedly told police.</p> <p>Fry said he believed his father was abusing him, but said he was never assaulted, according to the court documents. Prosecutors said in November 2019 he looked up “justifiable homicide” on the internet.</p> <p>On Nov. 21, Fry told police he thought he heard his father talking about a gun, but could have imagined it. Fry then confronted his father, punching and stabbing him repeatedly with a utility knife, court documents said.</p> <p>Fry then went to police to report the “premeditated murder on my father,” charges said.</p> <p>Snohomish County prosecutors charged Fry but Superior Court Judge Richard Okrent ordered 90 days of competency restoration treatment. At his intake, Fry reported feeling other people were putting thoughts in his head. A judge later ordered a second 90-day restoration period.</p> <p>In October 2020, a judge determined he could stand trial.</p> <p>But Fry stopped taking his medication and mental health concerns crept back, his public defender Robert O’Neal said Wednesday. Last spring, a judge ordered Fry receive more restoration treatment. In such cases, defendants are required to be admitted within a week.</p> <p>But months later, John Fry remained at the Snohomish County Jail because of a lack of beds at Western State Hospital.</p> <p>Across Washington, orders for restoration treatment have spiked. The past eight years have seen a 145% increase in demand, assistant attorney general Andrew Logerwell said August.</p>
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HEADLINE	09/24 Guilty plea: Molotov cocktails at protest
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/man-pleads-guilty-to-bringing-molotov-cocktails-to-seattle-protest/
GIST	<p>SEATTLE (AP) — A Renton, Washington, man has pleaded guilty to bringing 12 Molotov cocktails to a protest at the Seattle police union headquarters on Labor Day 2020.</p> <p>Justin Christopher Moore entered his plea to unlawful possession of destructive devices Thursday in U.S. District Court in Seattle, prosecutors said in a press release. He's scheduled to be sentenced on December 21, 2022. He faces up to 10 years in prison.</p> <p>According to the plea agreement, Moore made 12 gasoline devices and carried them to a protest march at the Seattle Police Officers Guild headquarters, prosecutors said. Police smelled gasoline and discovered the box in a parking lot.</p> <p>Investigators used video and information from other co-conspirators to confirm that Moore was the person carrying the box to the site, prosecutors said. A search of his home found "numerous items that are consistent with manufacturing explosive devices," prosecutors said.</p>
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